Ghanshyam Charitra

SATSANG PRARAMBHA

A Textbook of the Satsang Examinations Series: 2

Ghanshyam Charitra

Translation by: BAPS Sadhus
Gujarati Text: Prof. Ramesh M.Dave

Inspirer: HDH Pramukh Swami Maharaj

First eBook Edition: August 2012

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Contents

Blessings

Publisher's Note

1. Birth of Ghanshyam

2. Childhood Exploits

3. Darshan to Ramdayal

4. Naming the Lord

5. A Test for the Son

6. Ghanshyam Has His Ears Pierced

7. A Boon for Lakshmiji

8. Siddhis at His Service

9. Dudhpakh Instead of Khichdi

10. The Barber Sees a Miracle

11. Kalidatt Meets His End

12. Curing Smallpox

13. Fish Brought Back to Life

14. Sparrows Sent into Samadhi

15. Monkey in a Trance

16. Monkeys Get a Sound Thrashing

17. Ramdatt Is Taught a Lesson

18. In Which Direction Are the Aspirants?

19. Seen in Many Mandirs at the Same Time

20. The Ghost Well

21. The Wrestlers Are Defeated

22. The Greedy Confectioner

23. Khampa Talavdi

24. Sixteen Signs of God

25. Ghanshyam Stops the Killing

26. The Mahout Is Saved

27. A New Set of Teeth

28. A Feast for His Friends

29. Thousands Are Fed and Humbled

30. Lakshmibai Sees a Miracle

31. The Importance of Ekadashi

32. Ghanshyam Is Given the Sacred Thread

33. Ghanshyam Is Seen as Ramchandra

34. Sailing on Stone Slabs

35. Miracle Shown to Aunts

36. Ghanshyam Eats All the Food

37. In Search of Gauri, the Cow

38. Walking on Water

39. Thieves in a Fix

40. Darshan in Two Forms

41. The Priest's Sight Is Restored

42. Ghanshyam's Daily Routine

43. Propagating the Vishishtadvait Teachings in Kashi

44. Bhaktimata and Dharmadev Pass Away

45. Ghanshyam Leaves Home

46. On the Banks of River Saryu

47. Oceans of Tears

Glossary

Blessings

The youth movement established and nourished by Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj has been expanding at a very rapid pace. With a view to satisfying the aspirations and the thirst for knowledge of the youth joining the organization, and also to enable them to understand and imbibe the principles of Akshar and Purushottam expounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, the publications division, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, organized under the auspices of Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, presents a series of books.

Through these books, it is intended to impart systematic, sustained and pure knowledge in simple language on a scholastic basis to children and youth of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. It is hoped that this Sanstha, established by Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj for implementing and propagating the Vedic ideals propounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, will, through this activity, spread the ideals and noble traditions of the Sampradaya and through it, the culture and heritage of the Hindu religion.

It is the aim of this project to preach and spread the divine message of Bhagwan Swaminarayan to all corners of the world. We hope that all religious-minded truth-seekers of the Sampradaya and those outside of it, will welcome this activity and extend their fullest co-operation.

In order to encourage children and youths, annual examinations are held based on the curriculum as worked out in these books. Certificates are also awarded to successful candidates. We bless Pujya Ishwarcharan Swami, Prof. Rameshbhai Dave, Kishorebhai Dave, and all others who have cooperated in the preparation of these books.

Shastri Narayanswarupdasji
(Pramukh Swami Maharaj)
Jai Swaminarayan

Vasant Panchmi
V.S. 2028 (1972 CE)
Atladra

Publisher's Note

This publication, *Ghanshyam Charitra*, gives a brief introduction to the divine childhood of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Known as Ghanshyam, he was loved and revered by all. Right from birth his divinity was experienced by family, friends and strangers.

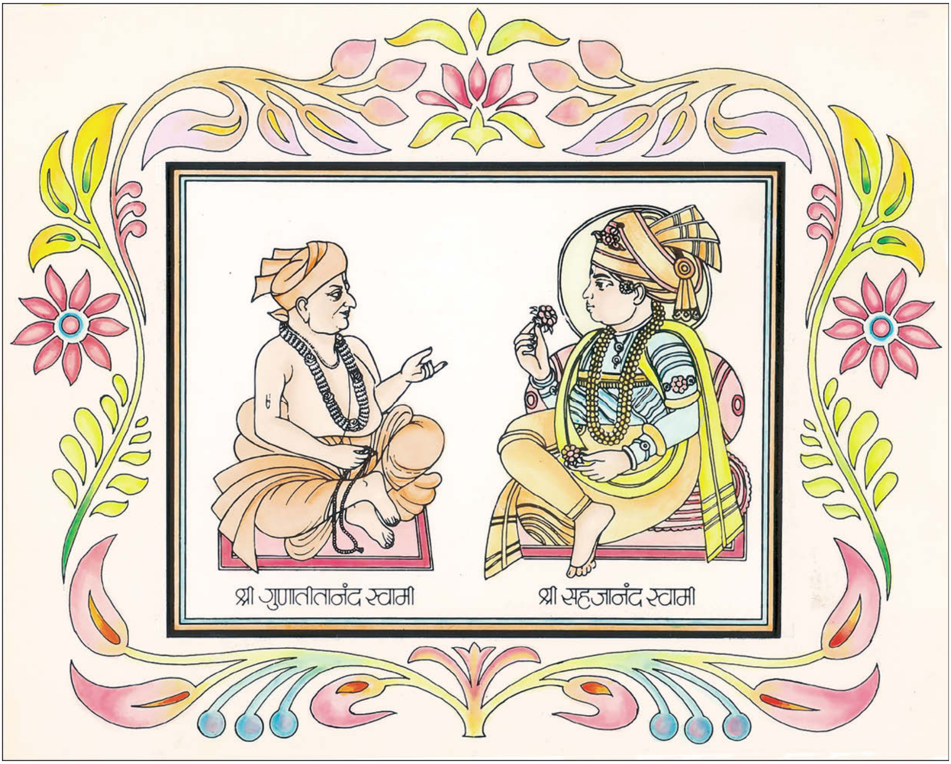
His childhood teaches us the virtues that should be developed from a young age. Ghanshyam's devotion to God, sincerity in studies, service to others, regularity, compassion and other noble qualities convinced everyone that he was the manifest form of God.

This interesting and inspiring collection of Ghanshyam's childhood stories will motivate all to develop such values in life.

The present publication is the English translation of the Gujarati text *Ghanshyam Charitra* written by Prof. Ramesh M. Dave. We thank the BAPS sadhus who have diligently produced this latest edition. This book is one of the course books for the Satsang Prarambha Examination.

It is our earnest prayer that all devotees will study these books carefully, pass the examination with flying colours and, above all, earn the blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and guru Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

- Swaminarayan Aksharpith



Ame sau Swāminā bālak, marishu Swāmine māte;
Ame sau Shrijitanā yuvak, ladishu Shrijine māte...
Nathi dartā nathi kartā, amārā jānni parvā;
Amāre dar nathi koino, ame janmyā chhie marvā...ame 1
Ame ā yagna ārambhyo, balidāno ame daishu;
Amārā Akshar Purushottam, Gunātit jnānne gāishu...ame 2
Ame sau Shriji tanā putro, Akshare vās amāro chhe;
Svadharmi bhasma choli to, amāre kshobh shāno chhe...ame 3
Juo sau motinā Swāmi, na rākhi kai te khāmi;
Pragat Purushottam pāmi, malyā Gunātit Swāmi...ame 4

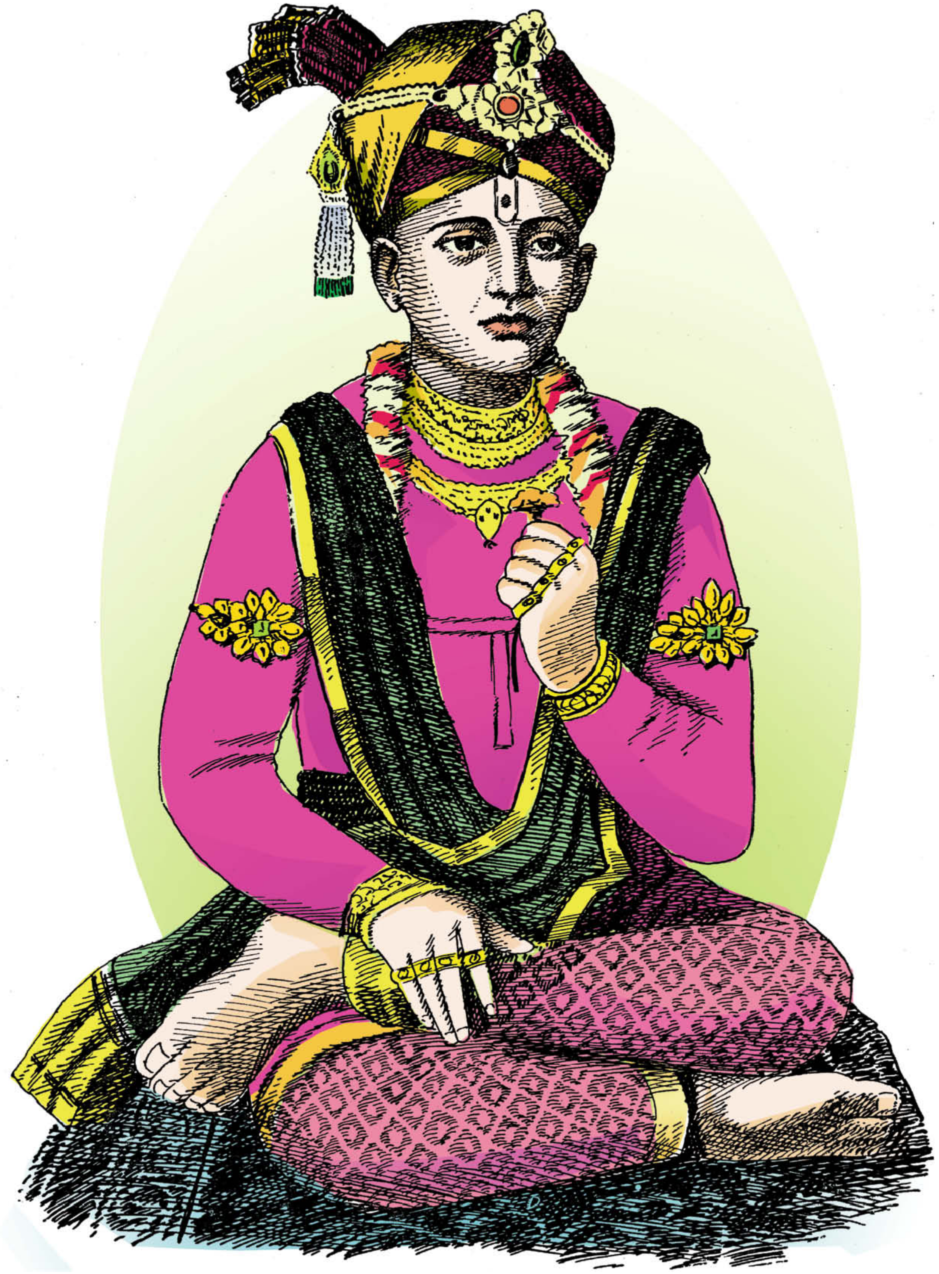
Translation

Pledge: Ame Sau Swamina Balak...

We are the children of Swami; we will die for him. We are the youths of Shriji Maharaj; we will fight for him. We are fearless; we will not shirk sacrificing our lives, for we are born to die. We have launched this movement and will undergo any suffering. We will sing the praises of Akshar-Purushottam.

We are the sons of Shriji Maharaj; we have our abode in Akshar. Consecrated as we are to *swadharma* (religious faith), we have no apprehension whatsoever. Lord Purushottam and Akshar, Gunatitanand Swami, are with us. We have accomplished our

goal.



Bhagwan Swaminarayan

1. Birth of Ghanshyam

Celebration of Ghanshyam's birth

Chhapaiya is a beautiful little village near Ayodhya, in Uttar Pradesh. All around it there are lots of banyan, pipal, mango, tamarind, guava and pomegranate trees. One finds a forest of *jambu* trees on its outskirts. There is a constant chirping of birds. The sweet notes of cuckoos, *mena*, *devchaklis*, parrots and peacocks, fill the air and enliven the atmosphere. The whole village looks enchanting with its tiny streets, and charming mandirs and houses.

It is the night of 3 April 1781 (Chaitra *sud* 9, Samvat year 1837). The time is 10 o'clock at night and there is rejoicing in and around the house of Dharmadev. Outside the house children are dancing with joy. Women are joyfully flocking to Dharmadev's house, singing and carrying large silver plates filled with *kumkum, gulal*, garlands of flowers and silken clothes in their hands. People are gathering all around the house. Outside, the Brahmins are reciting sacred mantras in the *yagna* arena. Dharmadev is donating ornaments, clothes and cows to Brahmins, sages and the poor. Rows of lighted lamps, arranged one above the other, give the whole house an enchanting glow. Drums and pipes are playing soulful tunes.

The gods shower flowers and come for darshan

But why are all these festivities taking place here tonight? Because a son has been born to Dharmadev and Bhaktimata. And it is Purna Purushottam Narayan, Supreme God, himself who has been born to Bhaktimata. God himself has manifested in the form of this newborn baby. His shining form fills the whole house with divine light and joy. Everyone is astonished to see such radiance. The gods shower flowers and *chandan* from the sky. Seated in their heavenly chariots, they fly in to have darshan of Dharmadev's son. Trumpets of victory are sounded all around.

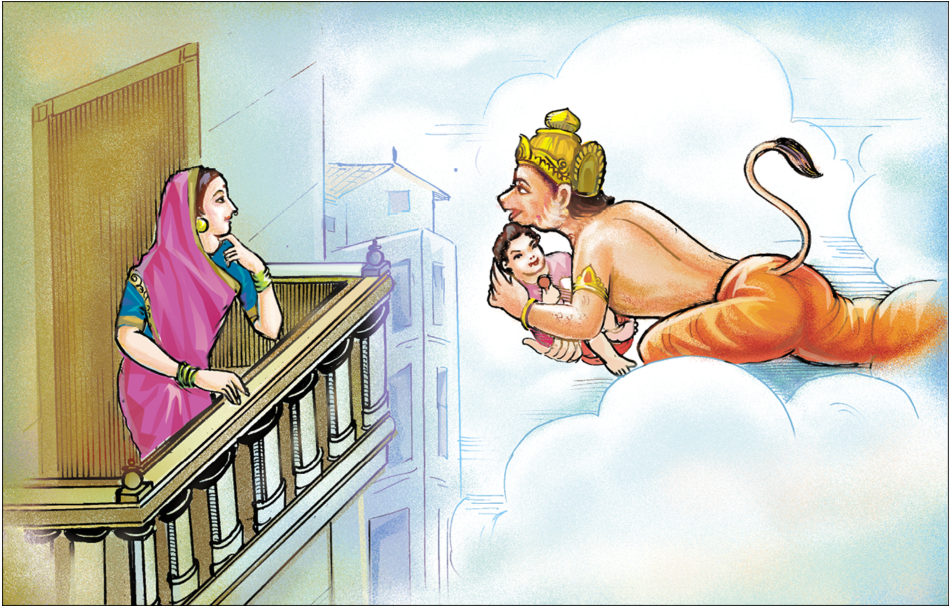
2. Childhood Exploits

There was an evil man named Kalidatt. He was foremost among sinners. He became very upset and agitated when he learnt that God had taken birth as a baby boy in Dharmadev's house.

One early morning, he ordered all his evil women accomplices, "Go to Dharmadev's house and kill the child-God." So the evil women came to Chhapaiya, and started looking for Dharmadev's house. The demonesses were all extremely dark in colour, with blood-red eyes, big pointed teeth, ugly faces and frightful voices. When they found Dharmadev's house, they peeped in quietly, and saw Bhaktimata feeding milk to child-God. They slowly stepped in and, before Bhaktimata realized what was happening, quickly lifted the child from her lap and tore away towards the mango grove.

Hanumanji, son of the wind-god, resided in the mango grove. Seeing evil women carrying the child-God away, he at once got up, took a few long jumps and soon caught up with them. He took the child from the hands of the old, evil woman who was carrying him and then caught hold of all the other demonesses, tied their ponytails to his own tail, and lashed it violently against the ground. He then pulled some of them by the hair and gave them a sound thrashing. Others, he lifted high, whirled them round and round, and finally threw them to the ground. They cried with pain, and tears in their eyes, asking for forgiveness, "Please let us go. We shall never again come to Chhapaiya." After their sincere pleas, Hanumanji let them go, and they quickly scampered off into the distance.

Hanumanji then quickly returned to the village, and gave the child-God to Bhaktimata. He prostrated before her, and said, "Mother, your child is God himself, and I am his humble servant. Please call me whenever you need my help. I shall be at your service." Bhaktimata, who was stricken with grief, was now greatly relieved. She took the child in her lap, pressed him to her bosom, and cuddled him with affection.

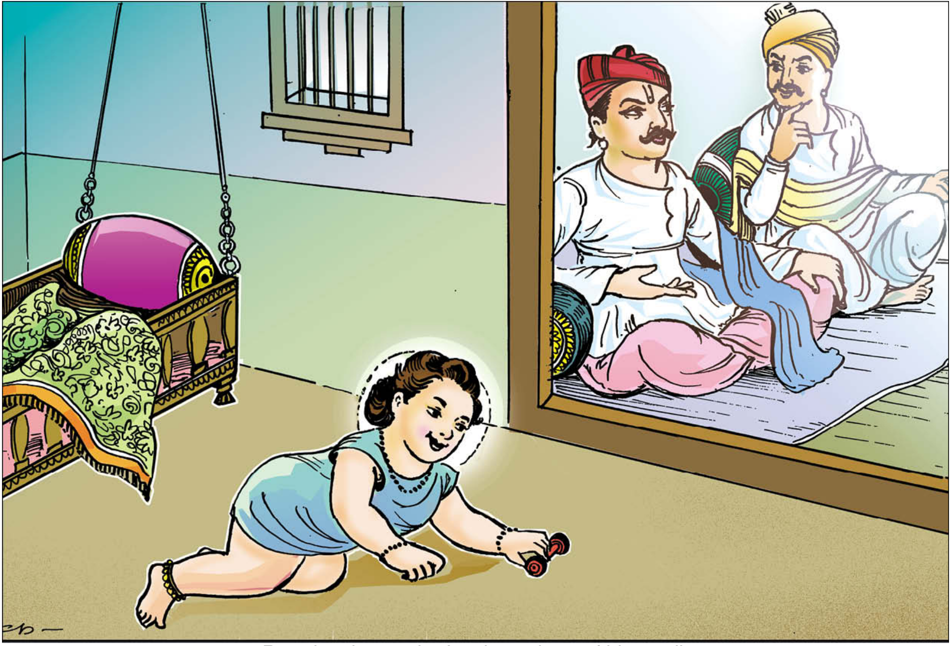

Hanumanji returns Ghanshyam to Bhaktimata

The evil accomplices returned to Kalidatt, and gave a report of what happened. Then they declared with one voice, “We shall never again go to Chhapaiya to bring the child-God. He has a servant named Hanuman. This Hanuman nearly beat us to death.” On hearing this, Kalidatta became furious. He sent his most senior demoness, Kotra, with instructions to kill the child-God.

The Lord's glance burns Kotra

Kotra came and stood before Dharmadev's house. She waited for the child-God to be left alone. But the Lord is all knowing. He looked at Kotra from the corner of his eyes and she started burning instantly. "I am burning, I am dying," she screamed. Thus shrieking and struggling to douse the flames, she died on the spot. And so Kotra, though as powerful as a giant, was within a short time, destroyed by the Lord. The children of the village were afraid on seeing Kotra's dead body. Everyone was speechless with fright. They all wondered as to how such an evil woman could have come so close to killing Dharmadev's chid. Dharmadev and Bhaktimata were also alarmed and took the child-God inside to rest.

3. Darshan to Ramdayal


Ramdayal sees the Lord crawl out of his cradle

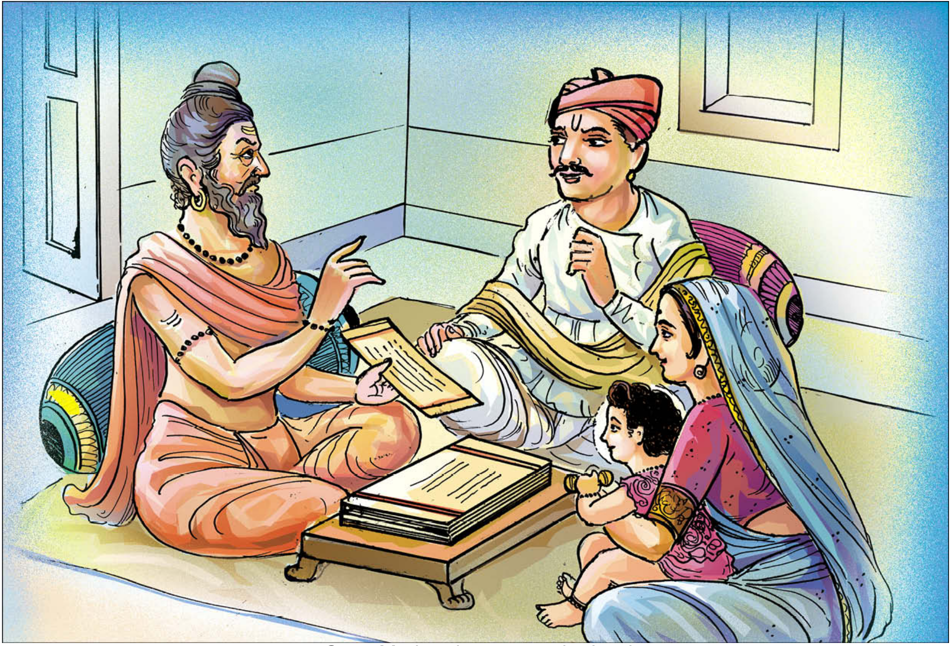
Days passed by and the Lord's exploits were becoming more and more astonishing. He was now two-and-a-half months old.

One day, as Bhaktimata had some work to do, she quickly placed the child-God in the cradle, and went to the kitchen. Soon after she was gone, the Lord sat up in the cradle. He saw his sucker lying some distance away on the floor. He climbed down from the cradle, crawled on his knees, picked it up and returned to the cradle.

Dharmadev's friend, Ramdayal, who was sitting nearby, saw all this. He asked Dharmadev, "How old is your son?" "He is only two-and-a-half months old," Dharmadev replied.

On hearing this Ramdayal thought, "For sure, the boy must be God himself. Otherwise, how could he have such awareness at such a young age." Thinking thus, he went to the Lord's cradle, and looked at him. Rays of brilliant light started coming out of the child's body, and the whole room was filled with brilliance. Ramdayal was astounded. Then and there he became convinced that the child was the incarnation of God himself.

4. Naming the Lord

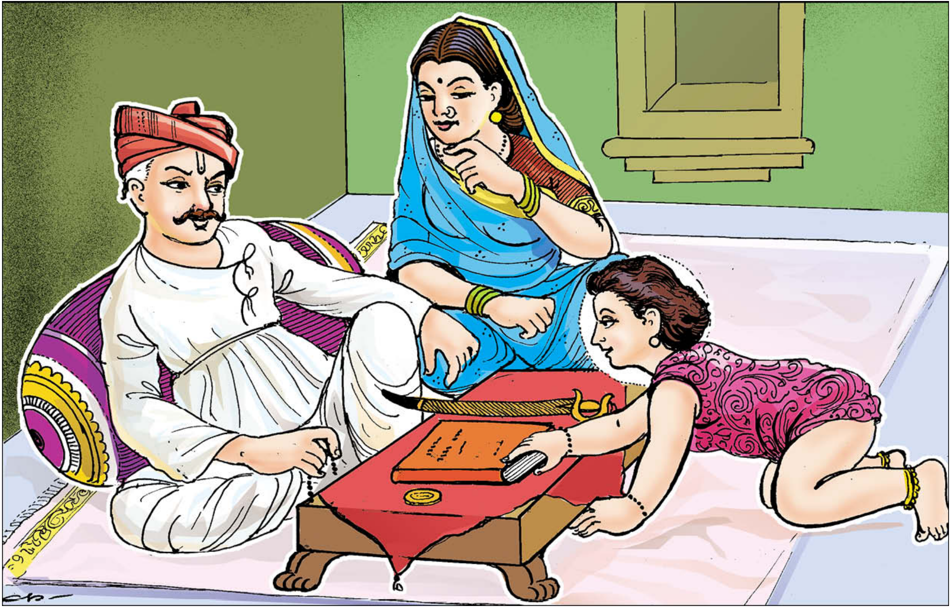

Sage Markandey names the Lord

When Lord was three months old, Sage Markandey came to Dharmadev's house. Dharmadev received him warmly, and honoured him. Then Dharmadev said, "You are a renowned and learned astrologer. So, please give my son a name and foretell his future?"

Sage Markandey opened his astrology book, and began to count on his fingers. After some time he smiled and said, "Your son is born under the sign of Cancer, so his name will be Hari. Since he has a dark complexion, he will also be known by the name Krishna. A combination of the two makes it into Harikrishna. People will also call him Ghanshyam. Your son possesses all the virtues like austerity, detachment, yoga, dharma, integrity, truthfulness and discretion, so he will also be known as Nilkanth. Your son will restore dharma on earth. He will relieve the miseries of countless people, and thus his fame will spread everywhere. He will grace people with samadhi, and liberate them. He will inspire them to worship God and grant happiness to all."

Dharmadev was overjoyed to hear all this. He gave new clothes, ornaments, cows and gold coins to the sage as *dakshina* and bade him farewell.

5. A Test for the Son

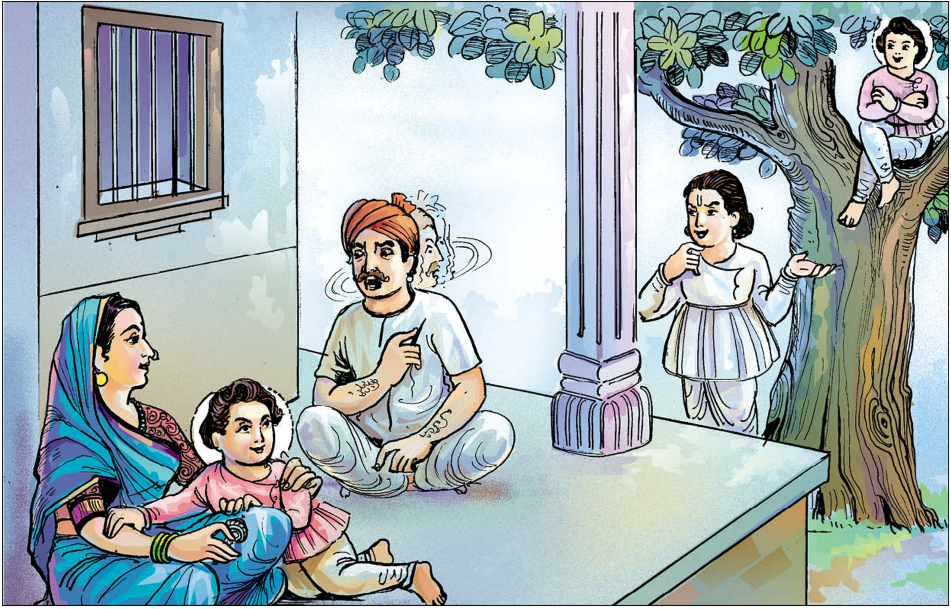


Ghanshyam picks up the book

Once, Dharmadev decided to test his son, Ghanshyam. He asked for a small stool from Bhaktimata and then covered it with a silk cloth. He placed a gold coin, a book and a small sword on it. Having done so, he and Bhaktimata sat near the stool, and waited with great interest to see which of the three things Ghanshyam would pick up.

Within a short time, Ghanshyam got down from his cradle, went to the stool and picked up the book. Seeing this, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata were convinced that their son would study and become a scholar.

6. Ghanshyam Has His Ears Pierced



Ghanshyam appears in two forms

When Ghanshyam was seven months old, Bhaktimata decided to have his ears pierced. The next day she took Ghanshyam out and sat on a platform by the foot of a tamarind tree just opposite their house. The man whose job it was to pierce Ghanshyam's ear-lobes came along. He approached Ghanshyam with a needle and tried gently to hold his ear. But as soon as he gripped the ear a dazzling light radiated from Ghanshyam which blinded the man's eyes. Wherever he turned his eyes he saw only the divine light. He was so frightened that he simply screamed.

Just then, Ghanshyam withdrew the light back into his body and disappeared from his mother's lap. His mother looked around anxiously for him. Then she saw him sitting on a branch of the tamarind tree. She at once called for her elder son, Rampratapbhai, and asked him, "See, Ghanshyam is seated on the tamarind tree. Climb up and bring him down."

However, when Rampratapbhai climbed the tree, he was surprised to find that Ghanshyam had disappeared and was sitting besides his mother on the ground below. So he climbed down. When he went back to his mother Ghanshyam was still sitting besides her. Then when he looked up, he saw Ghanshyam sitting up on the tree as well. Thus, for a long time, Ghanshyam was visible to Rampratapbhai in two separate places at the same time. The man who had come to pierce Ghanshyam's ears was frightened on seeing the two forms of Ghanshyam.

Then, Ghanshyam made his form on the tree disappear, and said, "Mother, I shall have my ears pierced if you give me some gur to eat."

On hearing this, Bhaktimata said, "You will certainly get some gur provided you behave properly and sit still to have your ears pierced." So saying, she sent for some gur from inside the house, and gave it to Ghanshyam. Thereupon, Ghanshyam sat on his mother's lap quietly and, while eating gur, allowed his ears to be pierced.

7. A Boon for Lakshmiji

Ghanshyam blesses Lakshmiji and her friend

Bhaktimata was now teaching Ghanshyam how to walk. One day, she held him by the hand and made him walk in the courtyard outside the house. After walking for some time, Ghanshyam was tired and sat down in the courtyard.

At that time Lakshmiji was passing across the sky with her friends. When she saw

Ghanshyam, she told one of her friends, “Take the form of a sparrow, and go and sit at the door of Ghanshyam’s house. Then when Ghanshyam comes to catch you, fly away and sit at some other place. Thus, make Ghanshyam run around, but don’t get caught.” So saying Lakshmiji hid in the sky to watch Ghanshyam and the bird.

Soon a sparrow came hopping around and sat at the door of Ghanshyam’s house. Ghanshyam at once stretched out his hand, and deftly caught the sparrow in his hand. The sparrow flapped and fluttered very hard, but could not free itself from Ghanshyam’s clutches, and so screamed aloud.

When Bhaktimata saw this, she became nervous, for if the sparrow pecked at Ghanshyam’s soft hand, it might bleed. So she snatched the sparrow from Ghanshyam’s hand, and as soon as she put it down on the ground a beautiful maiden sprang up from the sparrow.

She bowed to Ghanshyam and said, “I am Lakshmiji’s friend. She had asked me to take the form of a sparrow and come and play with you. I am afraid my beak may have struck you in the palm. Please forgive me.” Ghanshyam forgave her and blessed her. At that time Lakshmiji also arrived. She bowed to Ghanshyam with folded hands, and humbly requested him, “Please allow me the chance to serve you.”

Ghanshyam agreed to her request, “Come to Kathiawad when I go there and I shall fulfil your desire.” Lakshmiji was delighted to hear this and, after receiving Ghanshyam’s blessings, she went away joyfully.

8. Siddhis at His Service

The eight Siddhis serve delicious delicacies to Ghanshyam and Bhaktimata

Ghanshyam had a maternal aunt named Lakshmibai. One morning she asked Bhaktimata. “What shall I cook today?” Bhaktimata replied, “There is no hurry. When you find time you may cook *shiro*.” So Lakshmibai went to the kitchen, and leisurely began to prepare food. Hours passed and the meal was still not ready. Bhaktimata was very hungry. Ghanshyam came to know that his mother was hungry. So, he instructed the eight Siddhis to bring food at once. In no time, all the eight Siddhis descended from the sky. They were extremely beautiful, like the *apsaras* of heaven. They had put on fine, colourful dresses, and each one of them carried a plate in her hands. The plates were full of thirty-two delicious delicacies.

Bhaktimata was surprised to see these beautiful women in her house. The Siddhis said, “Mother, we are the Siddhis. As you were feeling hungry, Ghanshyam instructed us to bring food for you. We have brought many delicious dishes on these plates. Please eat some.”

Despite the request from the Siddhis, Bhaktimata hesitated. When Ghanshyam saw this, he came down from his cradle, ate a little from each plate himself, and then said to his mother, "You also eat." So, Bhaktimata also ate. No sooner had she finished, then Lakshmibai came from the kitchen with hot *shiro*. She was greatly surprised to see the eight Siddhis there, with plates full of many varieties of food.

Then the Siddhis offered to bring food every day. They said, "Mother, we shall bring delicacies for you everyday." But the Lord told them, "Do not bring food everyday but only when aunty is unable to cook the day's meal in time." Each one of the Siddhis then bowed at Ghanshyam's feet and disappeared into the sky.

9. Dudhpakh Instead of Khichdi

Gomti gives milk to Ghanshyam

One afternoon Ghanshyam felt hungry and asked Bhaktimata for some food to eat. She promptly gave him some cold *khichdi*. "Start eating this slowly, dear, while I bring some milk," she said, and went to the cow-pen.

There was a cow named Gomti in the pen. She was milked twice a day – in the morning and evening. Bhaktimata tried to milk her, but no milk flowed from her udders. In the meantime, Ghanshyam came to the cow-pen with a glass in his hands.

Seeing him Bhaktimata told him, “The milk will take some time, so go back and wait patiently.”

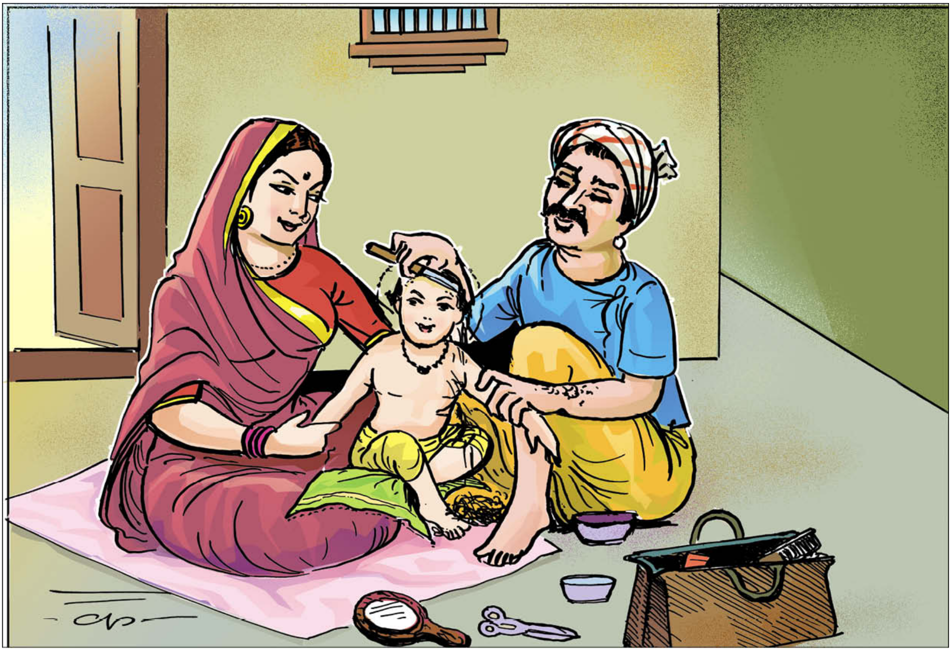
However, Gomti was very fond of Ghanshyam. If Ghanshyam wanted to drink milk, she would give it at any time. So when Ghanshyam held the glass under the cow’s udders, a stream of milk started flowing, and the glass became full in no time. Seeing this Bhaktimata was amazed. She rushed inside and brought a metal pot. And when she held it in place, it too became full, but still the milk did not stop flowing. Again, Bhaktimata went in and brought a bigger pot. That too was filled up in no time. Bhaktimata now started worrying that if the flow did not stop, all the vessels in the house would be filled only with milk.

However, Ghanshyam put her fears at ease, “Mother, don’t worry, now you will not have to fetch any more vessels. This milk flowed because of my wish, but now it will stop flowing.”

Still, Bhaktimata thought, “What if the flow of milk does not stop?” So, she again went to the kitchen to fetch a pot. When she returned with the pot, the milk had stopped flowing.

Bhaktimata was astounded to witness such a miracle; but naturally she felt proud of her son. She thought, “Since there is so much milk, let me prepare some *dudhpak*.” So she told Ghanshyam, “Now you need not eat cold *khichdi.* I shall quickly prepare *dudhpak* and *puri*.” Within a short time Bhaktimata cooked a meal of *dudhpak* and *puri* and lovingly fed Ghanshyam.

10. The Barber Sees a Miracle



Ghanshyam was now in his third year. Dharmadev decided that it was time to tonsure Ghanshyam's head. So, at an auspicious time the next morning, he sent for Amai, the barber. The latter soon turned up with his shaving kit.

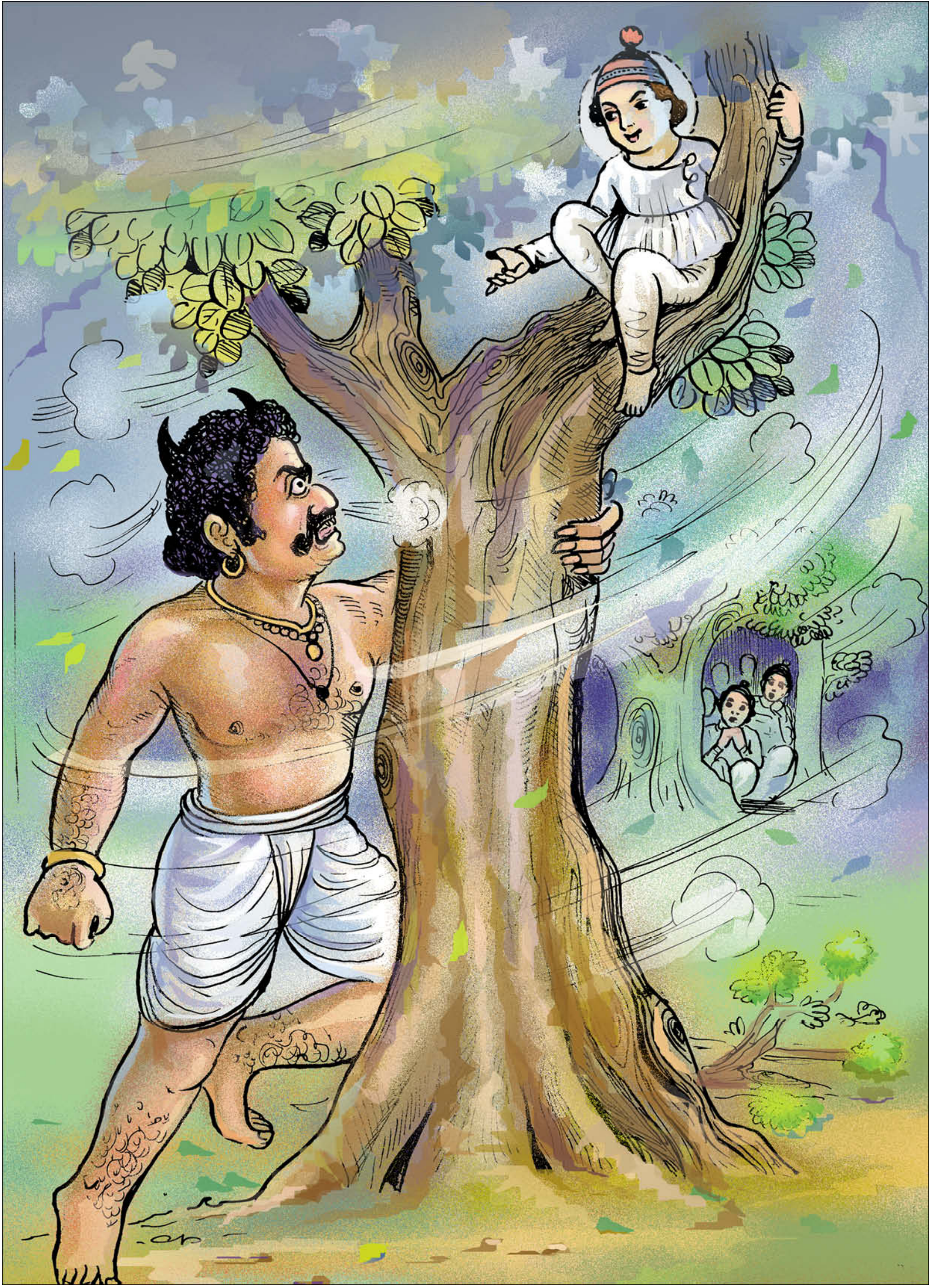
Bhaktimata took Ghanshyam in her lap and sat down facing east. Amai took out his razor and began to shave Ghanshyam's head. When the shaving was half finished, Ghanshyam became invisible to the barber. While everyone else could see Ghanshyam sitting in his mother's lap, Amai alone could not see him. So he got alarmed and stopped shaving. Seeing this, Bhaktimata told him, "What are you waiting for? Come on, finish the shaving."

Amai replied nervously, "What can I do, Mataji? How can I shave Ghanshyam when I cannot see him?" Hearing this, Bhaktimata whispered to Ghanshyam, "A half-shaven head does not look good. So do let him finish the shaving. Reappear to Amai."

Thereupon, Ghanshyam looked at Amai and became visible to him. Amai then went on to complete the shave. He was by now convinced that the child was God himself, and so he prostrated before him, received his blessings, and departed.

Ghanshyam then took a bath in the Narayan Sarovar. Dharmadev made donations to the Brahmins and distributed *patasa* to all. He then became engaged in the dinner arrangements for the Brahmins.

11. Kalidatt Meets His End



Kalidatt tries to destroy Ghanshyam

As Dharmadev and Bhaktimata were busy with their work, they forgot about Ghanshyam for sometime. Ghanshyam's friends came running to him so they could play together.

They all went to the mango garden, east of Narayan Sarovar, laughing and jumping, and began to play *ambli-pipli*. As they were playing the evil Kalidatt arrived there. He decided that he would carry away all the children, and kill Ghanshyam.

And so he stretched out his hand to catch hold of Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam looked at Kalidatt, who began to burn. This made him angry and so, with his magical powers, Kalidatt created a severe cyclone which brought torrential rains. Everything was plunged into darkness. The children began to shiver because of the cold. Kalidatt made loud shrieks to frighten the children. All the children hid themselves in the hollow of a big banyan tree.

But Ghanshyam went and sat under a mango tree that was a short distance away. Kalidatt was shouting and searching for Ghanshyam. First he saw Ghanshyam sitting under the mango tree and then, to his surprise, he saw him sitting on the tree. So he enlarged his body high up into the sky, and wilfully fell on the tree with tremendous force. Many branches fell with a crash. Kalidatt laughed in triumph, thinking that Ghanshyam had been completely crushed under the tree. He then started removing the fallen branches one by one in the hope of finding Ghanshyam's shattered body. But Ghanshyam was sitting unscathed, with the fallen branches as his protection.

Kalidatt was mystified and also terribly angry at the sight. He stretched out his arms to catch Ghanshyam.

Seeing this, Ghanshyam shot one burning glance at Kalidatt. Almost immediately, Kalidatt found his body lifted by an unknown force and hurled against the tree repeatedly, until he fell dead.

Then, by his divine power, Ghanshyam stopped the cyclone and rain. The weather became bright and clear again. Ghanshyam's friends came out of the hollow of the banyan tree, and searched for Ghanshyam.

Meanwhile, Bhaktimata remembered Ghanshyam. Along with Dharmadev, she began to look for him anxiously, and at last came to the mango tree. There they found him. Bhaktimata lifted her son and fondly cuddled him. Finding Ghanshyam back in their midst the children also rejoiced, and laughing and jumping as before, returned home.

12. Curing Smallpox

Ghanshyam bathes in cold water and is cured of smallpox

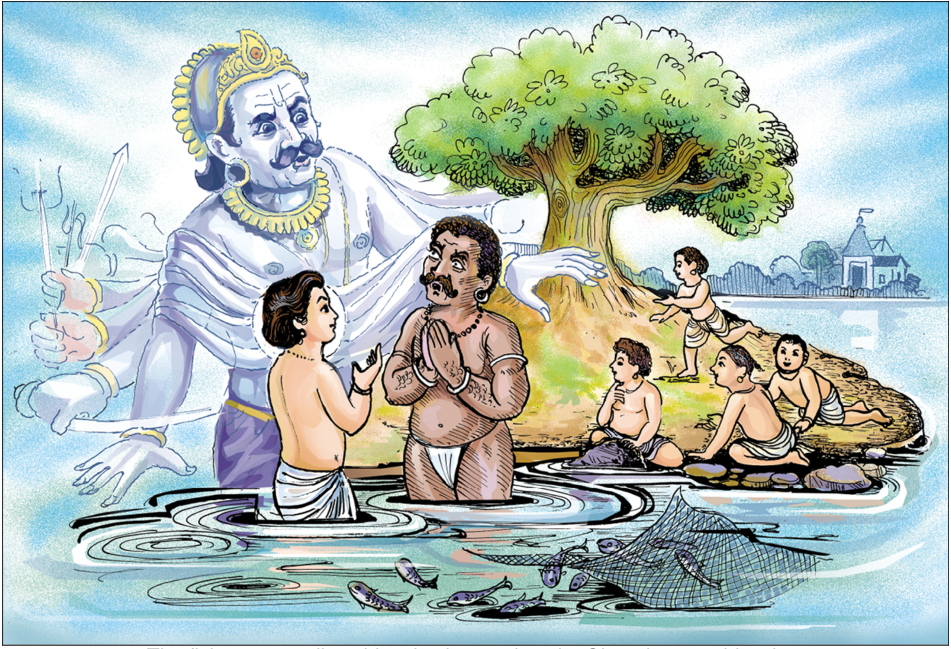
It was summer time and the heat was excessive. Ghanshyam was down with fever, so he did not take any food. When news of this reached Aunt Chandamasi, she came to enquire about him. When she saw Ghanshyam she realized that he had smallpox. So she advised her sister, Bhaktimata, “Ghanshyam has smallpox, so put him to bed in one of the more secluded rooms.”

Bhaktimata at once put Ghanshyam to sleep and began to pray. Then her sister-in-law, Lakshmibai, came to see Ghanshyam. Realizing that Ghanshyam had a high fever and smallpox, she said, “It will be advisable not to allow him to go out, or to wash, or even to touch water for twenty days.”

When Ghanshyam heard this, he said, “How can I go without my usual bath? We are Brahmins, and so must take a bath every day. So, please bring some cold water. When I’ll take a cold water bath the smallpox and the fever will both disappear.”

Bhaktimata believed his words. She took him to the well, and drew cold water for him. After pouring a few buckets of cold water on him, she felt his body and found that the smallpox had subsided and the fever too had gone down. Only a few dim spots were left on the body. Seeing the miraculous recovery, both Chandamasi and Lakshmibai thought that Ghanshyam must surely be God himself. They bowed to him, smiled and went back home.

13. Fish Brought Back to Life


The fisherman realizes his mistakes and seeks Ghanshyam 's blessings

One day in Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam called out to his friends, Veni, Madhav and Prag and proposed, “Let us go to Meen Lake for a bath.” The friends were delighted. Then the four of them went to Meen lake. A banyan tree stood on the banks of the lake. The boys changed their clothes in the shadow of the tree.

Meanwhile, Ghanshyam’s eyes fell on a lone fisherman.

He was a dark, tall, well-built man. He was catching fish and putting them in a basket. Ghanshyam saw a pile of fish in the basket. His heart bled at the sight of so many dead fish. He willed that the fish became alive again. As soon as he had wished all the fish came to life and leapt back into the water.

The fisherman became very angry. He rushed towards Ghanshyam to beat him up. Ghanshyam thought that the arrogance of a proud man must be dissolved; one who kills living beings must be punished. So he took the form of Yama Raja, the god of death, and walked up to the fisherman.

Yama Raja’s appearance was frightening and awesome. He had a big moustache, sharp protruding teeth, blood-red eyes and a long tongue that hung out of his mouth. He had eighteen hands; each armed with different weapons: sword, spear, trident, etc.

The fisherman became terrified at the sight of Yama Raja. His hands and legs began to tremble. Perspiration ran down his face and body. Yama Raja showed him a vision of hell and the punishments that await the wicked and the sinful in Yampuri – hell. Then he got him soundly thrashed by his attendants. The fisherman’s bones ached and he screamed in pain, “Please save me, please let me go.”

The fisherman had finally realized his mistake. He asked for forgiveness and prayed to Ghanshyam, “My bones are all aching. I am frightened and shiver all over when I think of Yampuri and the terrors of hell. I have made a mistake. Please forgive me. I

shall not henceforth kill fish. You are God incarnate. Please set me free from my past sins." So saying, he prostrated before Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam blessed him, and let him go.

Ghanshyam and his friends then had their bath in the lake and returned home.

14. Sparrows Sent into Samadhi

Ghanshyam puts the monkey into samadhi

Near Chhapaiya is Targaam. On its outskirts was a field belonging to Dharmadev. One day, Dharmadev said, "Ghanshyam, the rice in our field is now ripe. But the sparrows are spoiling the crop. Besides, today we are going to a neighbouring village on some urgent work. So, you go and look after the field." Ghanshyam readily said, "Yes." Bhaktimata served him food, put a cap on his head and gave him a pair of velvet-slippers to wear. She also gave him a long stick and then sent him out to guard the field.

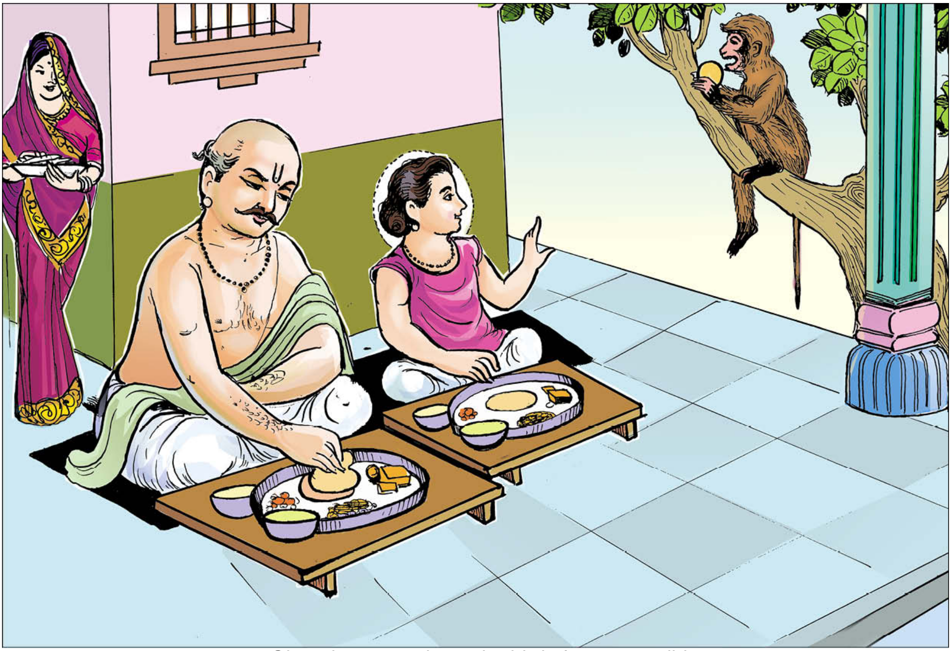
Playing with his stick, Ghanshyam soon reached the field. He climbed a *jambu* tree and saw hundreds of sparrows in the field. Some were sitting on trees; some were pecking at the rice; yet others were just flitting from place to place. Ghanshyam thought, "I do not want to harm the sparrows. What shall I do?"

Suddenly an idea occurred to him. He made a loud sound. Lo and behold! All the sparrows went into samadhi. Some were on the trees, some on the ground and some were on the rice crop. Wherever they were and whatever they were doing, they became still and silent at once.

While the sparrows were in samadhi, Ghanshyam went away to Madhavram Shukla's field nearby. There he played with his friends, Raghuvir and Buxram. Evening fell. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai came to the field to fetch Ghanshyam. But Ghanshyam was not there. They searched and searched, and at last found him playing in the neighbouring field.

Dharmadev called him, and said in a tone of rebuke, "What were you told? Were you not sent to look after the crops?" Ghanshyam calmly replied, "Father, let us go to the field and see how things are." When they returned to the field, they saw the sparrows transfixed in their places. Some were lying on the ground, some were sitting on the trees, some others had rice in their beaks. But all were hushed and motionless. Dharmadev was greatly surprised and wondered whether all the sparrows had suddenly died in his farm. Both he and Rampratapbhai stood speechless for some time. Ghanshyam then gave a loud call and, in an instant, all the sparrows flew away. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai thought, "Ghanshyam is the supreme God and this must be his doing. The lives of all living beings are in his hands." Thinking this they returned home with Ghanshyam.

15. Monkey in a Trance



Ghanshyam awakens the birds from samadhi

As the harassment by evil people was increasing Dharmadev decided to leave Chhapaiya and go to Ayodhya. He put all the furniture and other household goods in a decorated cart, and the whole family left for Ayodhya. After a while, they reached the

bank of the River Saryu. The luggage was then placed in a boat. And the boat carrying the family soon reached Ayodhya on the opposite bank of the Saryu. There, they took a beautiful house in the Barhatta Street of the town.*

One evening Ghanshyam sat next to Dharmadev for dinner. Bhaktimata was serving them. Just then a monkey on a tree opposite saw Ghanshyam eating his meal. Crying 'Hoop, hoop, hoop,' the monkey came up to the verandah and with a sudden dash, carried away a whole lot of chapattis. He then took another long jump and got back on to the tree. As the monkey sat munching the chapattis, Ghanshyam gave the monkey a steady look, and the monkey went into samadhi straight away with the chapattis still in his hands. For three days the monkey remained in samadhi, and sat there motionless.

After three days he woke up, hopped to Ghanshyam's house, and sat at his feet with folded hands. Ghanshyam blessed him and also gave him something to eat. The monkey then went back quietly and contentedly to the tree.

16. Monkeys Get a Sound Thrashing

Ghanshyam catches the monkeys

Once Ghanshyam took some *puris* and yogurt on a plate and sat down to eat in the verandah. A mischievous monkey came up with a leap, snatched some *puris* from Ghanshyam's plate and leapt back to a branch of the tamarind tree and sat there. Ghanshyam stretched out his hand, caught hold of the monkey by the neck and threw him to the ground. The monkey yelled with pain.

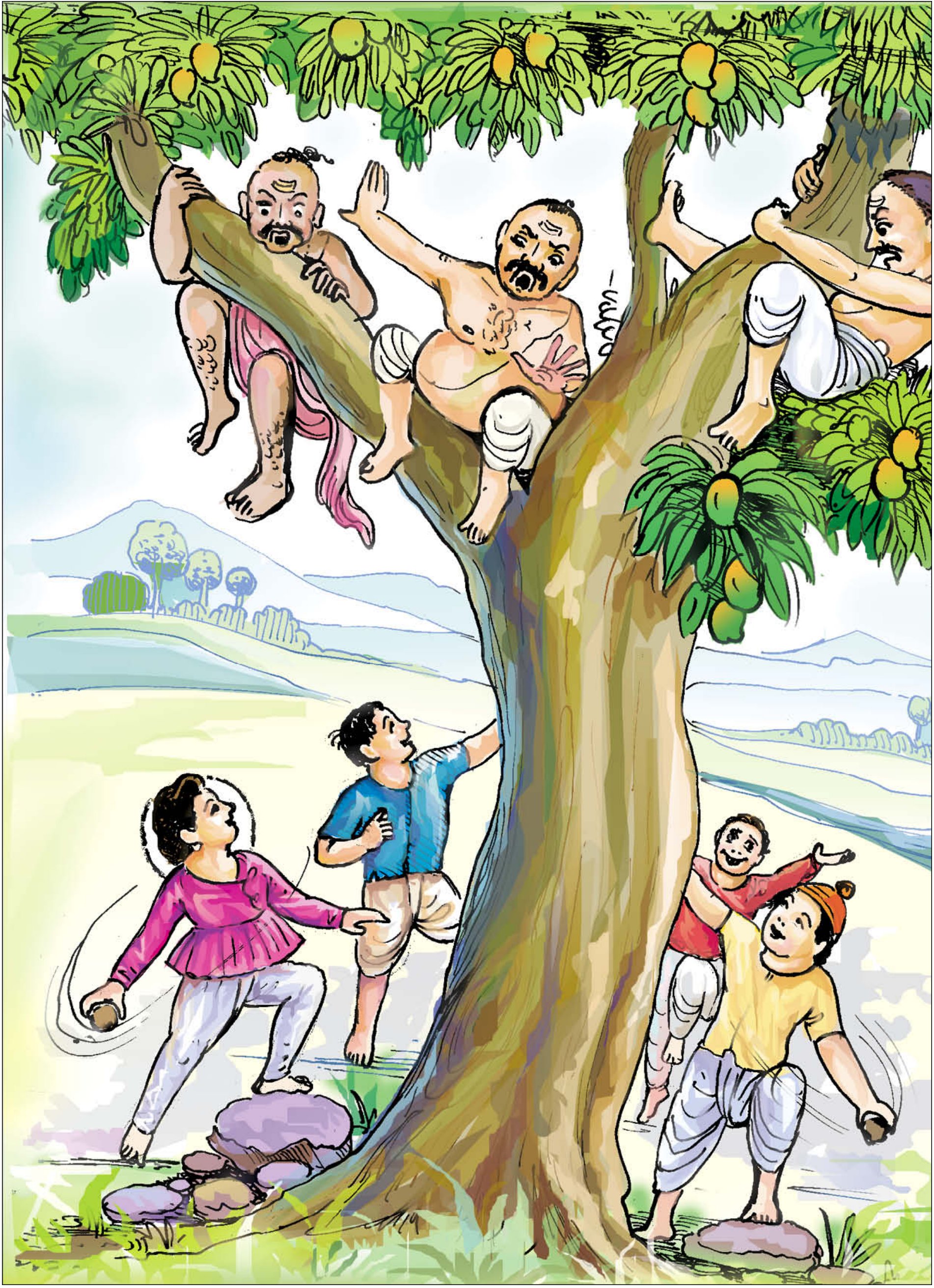
On hearing the yells, a score of other monkeys came running up. They all hooted and jumped to attack Ghanshyam. Slowly they surrounded him from all sides. Dharmadev saw this. Fearing that the monkeys might kill Ghanshyam, he went inside to fetch a stick.

In the meantime, Ghanshyam assumed as many separate forms of himself as there were monkeys. Then each of his forms ran after one of the monkeys. The monkeys became frightened at seeing so many forms of Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam hurled some of the monkeys away by catching hold of their ears, and some by catching their leg. Yet others he threw by the tail, and some he grabbed by the mouth and pushed them away. The rest shrieked and yelled out in fright, and ran away as fast as they could. Ghanshyam then made all his other forms disappear.

In a short while, his father came out with a big stick. He found that all the monkeys had run away. He was delighted to see that Ghanshyam had somehow got rid of all of them. With this miracle he became quite sure that his son was no other than God himself.

17. Ramdatt Is Taught a Lesson

One day Ghanshyam told his friends, “Let us go for a bath in the lake.” The boys got ready and, led by Ghanshyam, they all went to the lake. All of them jumped into the water, played hide and seek, swam for a long time, and in the end felt very hungry.



Ghanshyam and his friends teach Ramdatt and the Brahmins a lesson

Ghanshyam then took his friends to the mango grove. There was a big mango tree by the roadside with many ripe, tempting mangoes. Ghanshyam climbed up the tree, while his friends waited below. Ghanshyam began to pluck the ripe mangoes from the tree, and throw them down to Veni, Madhav and Prag, who caught them in a cloth stretched out under the tree. The rest of the boys kept watch.

Meanwhile, a group of Brahmins came by, led by their leader called Ramdatt. He

was a tall, tough man. He told his companions, “All of you start picking up these mangoes.” Hearing this Veni stopped them, “These mangoes have been picked by us. If you want any mangoes, pluck them from the tree yourself.”

Ramdatt lost his temper. Rolling his big eyes, he tried to scare away the boys. He even tried to snatch the mangoes forcibly. Ghanshyam was watching all this sitting on the tree. Seeing Ramdatt’s impudence, Ghanshyam came down quickly to the lowest branch. He bent down and as Ramdatt was busy snatching the mangoes, Ghanshyam lifted the drinking pot that was hanging on a string from the Brahmin’s shoulder, and rushed back to the top of the tree.

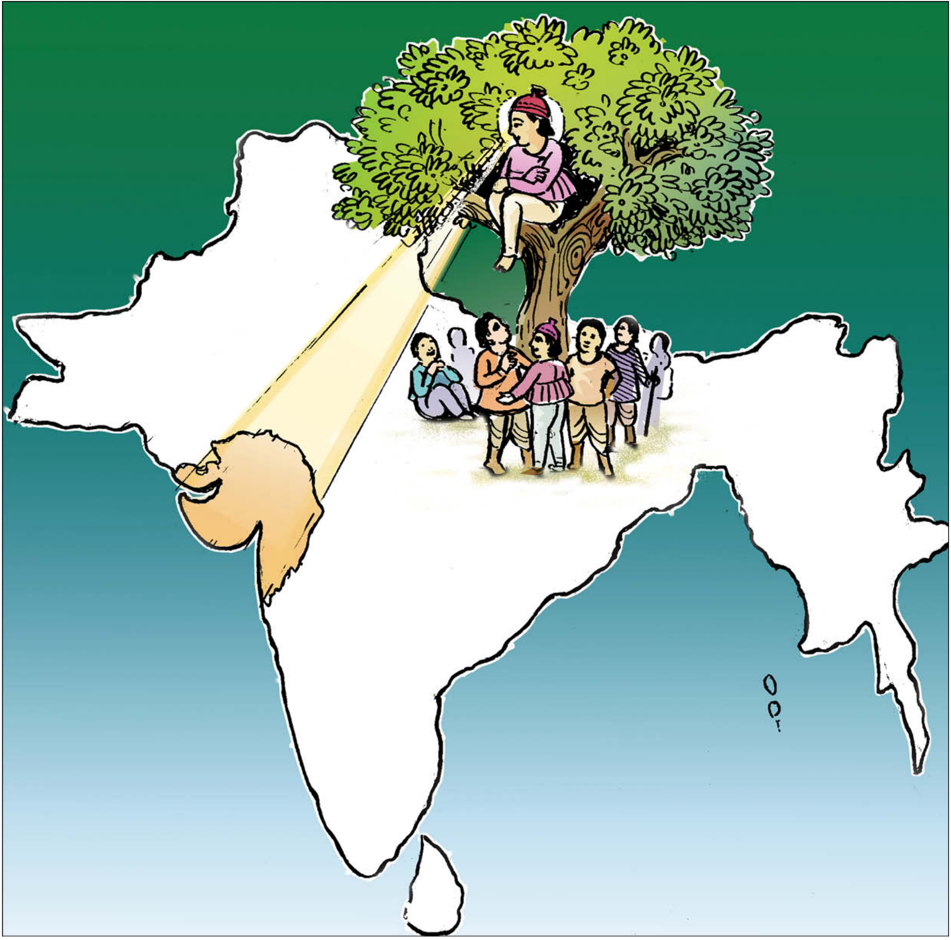
Ramdatt’s anger knew no bounds. He climbed up the tree with the aim of catching Ghanshyam and pushing him off the tree. But Ghanshyam made Ramdatt chase after him from one branch to another without falling into his hands.

Ramdatt was at his wit’s end. He asked the other Brahmins, who were standing below, “All of you climb the tree. And then let us all make efforts to catch Ghanshyam.” So, one by one, they all climbed up the tree, and each one sat waiting on a separate branch. Ghanshyam then climbed up to the topmost branch, Ramdatt also began to climb after him to the topmost branch, but before he could reach to the top, Ghanshyam had disappeared.

When the Brahmins looked down, they saw Ghanshyam standing below, teasing Ramdatt by holding aloft the drinking pot with the string. Then Ghanshyam told his friends, “Don’t allow a single Brahmin to come down. Let us keep throwing stones at them.” So they all began to hurl pebbles at the Brahmins. Soon, the Brahmins became tired and completely exhausted in their efforts to avoid the pebbles. At last they realized their folly in challenging Ghanshyam. They thought that this boy must surely be God himself, for how else could his disappearance from the tree be explained? When, at last, they beseeched him to stop the attack, Ghanshyam agreed, and Ramdatt and his group of Brahmins were allowed to come down.

Then Ramdatt then asked Ghanshyam to forgive them. Ghanshyam forgave them and returned the drinking pot. After paying homage to him, the Brahmins went on their away.

18. In Which Direction Are the Aspirants?



Ghanshyam climbs the pipal tree and looks west

There was a pipal tree on the outskirts of Chhapaiya. Ghanshyam was very fond of it. Very often, he would stop playing with his friends and climb the pipal tree. He would sit there for a long time, looking west.

His friends could not understand this behaviour of Ghanshyam.

One day, as usual, Ghanshyam left his friends in the middle of a game, and climbed the pipal tree, and sat on a high branch, and began looking west with great concentration. His friend, Veni, saw this. Ghanshyam sat on the tree till late in the evening, and then got down from the tree to go home. Immediately, Veni went up to him, put
his hand on his shoulder and asked him softly, "Ghanshyam, what were you looking at to the west from high up on
the tree?"

Ghanshyam replied, "I was looking in the direction where there are spiritual aspirants. Thousands of miles away from our village, in the west, are the lands of Gujarat and Kathiawad. Shri Krishna's Dwarika lies there. Many aspirants who yearn to meet God live in that region. One day I want to go there from here. I want to see the

sacred places in the Himalayas and elsewhere in India too, but I want to live in Kathiawad. The devotees there are calling me."

Veni could not follow what Ghanshyam really meant. He simply took Ghanshyam's hand and began to walk towards home slowly and silently.

19. Seen in Many Mandirs at the Same Time

Ghanshyam listens to the Ramayan at the Hanuman Gadhi

One day, it so happened that Ghanshyam did not come back for lunch. Bhaktimata told Rampratapbhai, "Go and call Ghanshyam. Rampratapbhai went straight to Hanuman Gadhi. There the Ramayan was being narrated and Ghanshyam was wholly engrossed in listening to it. Rampratapbhai approached him and asked him to come home with him. "I will come soon," said Ghanshyam, and asked Rampratapbhai to go.

There were many mandirs on the way. So, Rampratapbhai thought he might as well have darshan. He entered one of the mandirs, and to his surprise he found Ghanshyam, sitting and listening to the Ramayan. Out of curiosity, Rampratapbhai went back to the Hanuman Gadhi mandir, and sure enough, Ghanshyam was still sitting there. He was amazed. Out of interest, Rampratapbhai visited the other mandirs on the way. He saw Ghanshyam sitting in all of them.

Rampratapbhai was greatly surprised and delighted.

Returning home, he related this miracle to Dharmadev and Bhaktimata. All were surprised, and very happy.

Just then Ghanshyam returned home. He washed his hands and feet, and then quietly sat down for lunch with Dharmadev and his brothers. Bhaktimata fed Ghanshyam with even greater love and devotion than before.

20. The Ghost Well

Ghanshyam forgives and blesses the ghosts in the well

Once a Nawab came to Ayodhya. Whichever village he went to, he harassed the villagers there in many ways. He kidnapped the children, and robbed the people.

Worried about this, Dharmadev took his family to Tinwa to stay there for a few days, and thus escape the Nawab's tyranny. A man called Prathit Pande lived there. His wife's name was Vachanabai. Dharmadev and his family went to stay with them. Vachanabai served delicious food to Ghanshyam every day. Bhaktimata helped her in the housework. She also drew water from the well and brought it home in large pots. But there was danger if one went to the well after sunset. Vachanabai warned Bhaktimata, "You should never go to the well to fetch water after sunset. There are thousands of ghosts in the well, and they will harass you. So never go to the ghost well in the evening."

One evening, it so happened that all the water in the house had been used up. The sun had already set, and Bhaktimata, having forgotten there were ghosts in the well, went to fetch water. She tied a rope around the neck of a pot, and let it down into the well. Before the pot could touch the water, the ghosts seized it. Bhaktimata pulled hard at the rope, but the pot would not move. She peeped into the well, and saw thousands of ghosts. She became terrified and hurried back home. When she returned, she was perspiring all over with fear. Ghanshyam saw her and asked, "What happened, mother? Why did you come back home so hurriedly? Where did you leave the pot and the rope?" Bhaktimata told him about the ghosts she had just seen in the well.

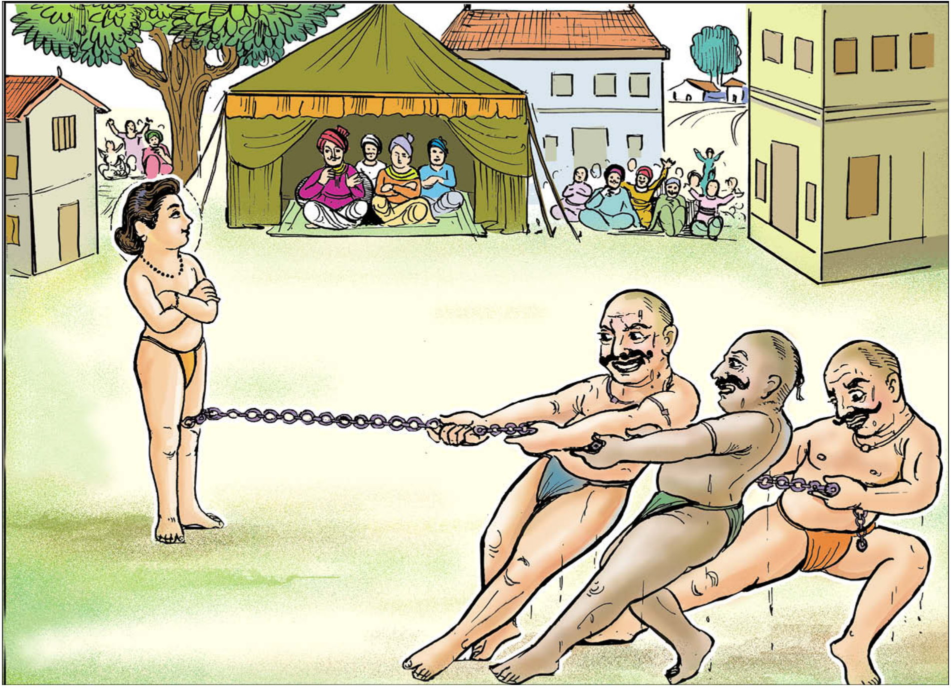
The next morning, Ghanshyam decided to jump into the well. The villagers rushed to him, and tried to dissuade him, "Don't jump in there. The ghosts will eat you up." But Ghanshyam did not pay any heed to their warning, and leapt into the well. As soon as he splashed into the water, the ghosts were startled from their sleep. When they tried to get hold of Ghanshyam, his body began to radiate rays of brilliant light. Soon the ghosts began to burn due to the light.

All the ghosts pleaded, "O God! Please save us." Ghanshyam asked them, "How do you happen to be here?" One of the ghosts replied, "Many years ago we were people with bad natures. We ate meat, took liquor, gambled and told lies. We got into a big quarrel with the king. Then it developed into heavy fighting, and we were all slain at this very spot. But as we were sinners, we have become ghosts and live here. Ghanshyam! You are God. Please destroy our past sins. Please forgive us and redeem us."

Hearing their plea, Ghanshyam pardoned their sins, delivered them from bondage, and sent them to Badrikashram.

From then onwards the well become free from ghosts. The village people could happily go at any time of the day to fetch water. They all praised Ghanshyam and paid homage to him.

21. The Wrestlers Are Defeated


The wrestlers challenge Ghanshyam

In Ayodhya, Ghanshyam practised wrestling every evening at Rajghat with Kesarisang and other friends. One morning, as Ghanshyam was wrestling with Kesarisang, another wrestler named Mahabali from Nepal came. Mahabali was a tall, tough and strongly built man. He had defeated many wrestlers in public contests.

Seeing Ghanshyam perform various wrestling manoeuvres, Mahabali began to laugh. So Ghanshyam challenged him to a match. He showed that he had strength equal to that of ten thousand elephants and defeated Mahabali. News of Mahabali's defeat by Ghanshyam spread throughout the city of Ayodhya and the neighbouring villages. Ghanshyam became famous everywhere.

When some of the more renowned wrestlers of Ayodhya such as Mansang, Dillisang and Bhimsang heard this, they went to the king, Raidarshansinh, and said, "We shall wrestle with Ghanshyam and defeat him." The King advised them, "Ghanshyam may look like a child, but he is God incarnate. Nobody can defeat God. You will never win in a fight with him. So, give up your foolish resolve."

But the three wrestlers did not listen. They were adamant. Boastfully, they said to the king, "Your Majesty, we will throw Ghanshyam to the ground before your very eyes. Give us a reward after seeing our wrestling and victory."

The king agreed, "All right. Go and make preparations for the match. I will come to see the wrestling. You boast a great deal. But don't get defeated and suffer disgrace." Still, the three wrestlers continued to boast, "Ghanshyam is nothing before us. We shall throw him away as easily as a mosquito."

In a short time, a proclamation was issued all over Ayodhya, "Under the orders of His Majesty the King, the three wrestlers, Bhimsang, Dillisang and Mansang, will fight

a wrestling match with Ghanshyam this evening at the ground next to the well by the tamarind tree near the house of Dharmadev. His Majesty King Raidarshansinh will be present to witness the fight. All the citizens of Ayodhya are requested to be present."

The royal servants started cleaning the grounds near the well. Other servants prepared a canopy for the king. Soon all the preparations were completed. Special seats with thick cushions and mattresses were arranged for the king and his courtiers. Flags and buntings were put up.

However, Dharmadev was deeply worried, "What if the giant wrestlers kill my little son? Today, the king is coming to test my son. What will happen?"

Seeing his father in such deep anxiety, Ghanshyam reassured him, "Don't be afraid, father. Don't worry at all. God will protect his honour." Then Ghanshyam suddenly grew bigger and bigger, and appeared as a giant wrestler. Then, after a while, he drew that form within himself, and shrunk to his original size. Seeing this Dharmadev and Bhaktimata felt certain that he would be more than a match for the giant wrestlers, and their fears disappeared.

Evening came. Large crowds gathered to see the king, and to witness Ghanshyam bring the pride of the three big wrestlers down to dust. The arena was soon packed, the arrival of the king and his courtiers was announced. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai also arrived with Ghanshyam.

Seeing Ghanshyam, the oldest of the three wrestlers, Bhimsang, made a loud sound by striking his hand on his thigh, and then roared, "Come on here into the ring. Today we shall show you our might."

Ghanshyam went inside the ring with a confident smile. Bhimsang then took a huge, thick iron chain, tied it to his right leg, and stood still in the middle of the ring. Then he spoke to the assembled citizens, "My right leg possesses a strength equal to that of a hundred elephants. I shall concede Ghanshyam to be the stronger of us two if only he can make me fall or move my right leg by pulling the chain."

Ghanshyam first bowed at his father's feet. Then he bent down and lifted the chain with his left hand and with a single pull of the chain threw Bhimsang off balance. The chain broke into two. Bhimsang was hurled against the tamarind tree and his nose and mouth started bleeding profusely.

On his stunning defeat, Bhimsang was fuming with rage. Taking another chain, he challenged Ghanshyam again, "Ghanshyam, if you think you are really that strong, then tie this chain to your leg and stand still. Then I will pull the chain and lift you, whirl you round and round and throw you down." Ghanshyam replied, "Come, I am ready." Ghanshyam then tied the chain to his left leg and stood still with his eyes closed.

Bhimsang then pulled hard at the chain, but Ghanshyam's leg would not move at all. Then all the three wrestlers pulled together with all their might, but Ghanshyam's leg did not budge even an inch. The three then tried with renewed vigour. Their nostrils blew up, and the knots in their loin-cloths loosened, but Ghanshyam stood firm as a rock. Seeing this, the whole crowd roared with laughter.

The three wrestlers were made with anger. Then, with bloodshot eyes, they tried

one last time, using all their strength in pulling the chain. Then suddenly, the chain broke into pieces, and the three men fell to the ground with a deafening thud. They were badly hurt. They could not even get up. All this time Ghanshyam was standing motionless at the same spot, with a smile on his face.

King Raydarshansinh then stood up to proclaim Ghanshyam's victory, and gifted him with clothes and ornaments. He distributed sweets to the people. The king asked the three wrestlers to apologize to Ghanshyam for bragging about their strength. Thereupon, the three wrestlers asked for pardon from Ghanshyam, and promised, "From now on we will never boast about our strength. You are God incarnate, please forgive our mistake." Ghanshyam blessed them. Thereafter, the king seated Dharmadev and Ghanshyam on an elephant, and took them triumphantly around the city in a procession. Every house in Ayodhya celebrated Ghanshyam's victory.

22. The Greedy Confectioner

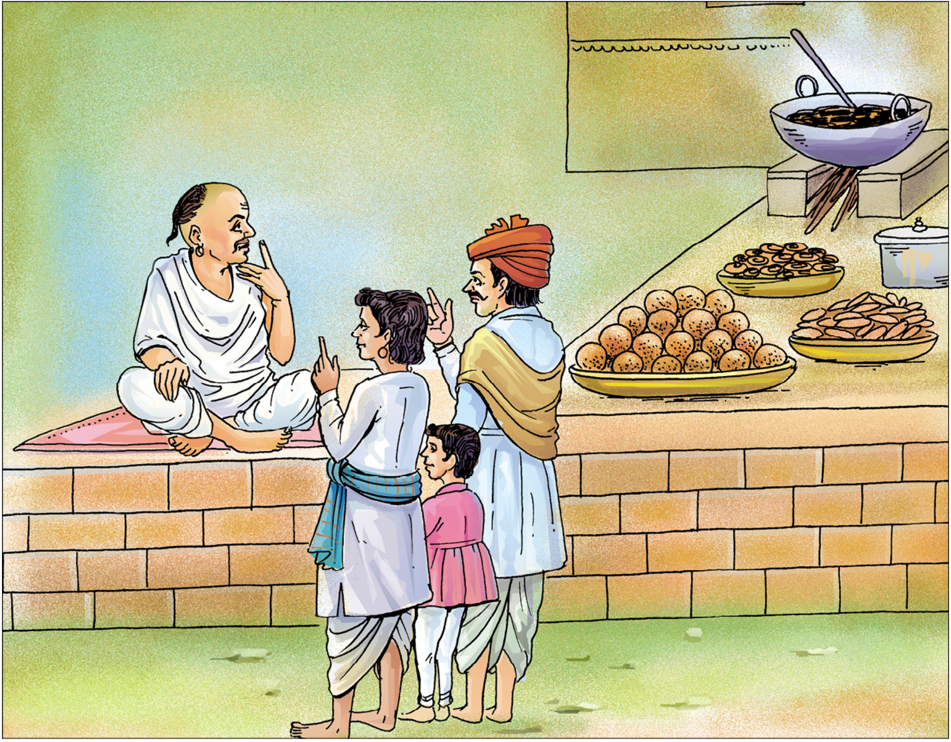
One morning Suvasinibhabhi (Rampratapbhai's wife) was busy in the kitchen cooking food. Ghanshyam entered the kitchen and said to his Bhabhi, "Bhabhi! Bhabhi! I am very hungry. Quickly give me some food."

Bhabhi replied, "The food will be ready in a little while. But if you are very hungry, shall I give you some grams or *sukhdi?"*

But Ghanshyam did not want that. He insisted that he wanted to eat *pendas*. Suvasinibhabhi was very surprised. Ghanshyam's nature of not saying anything even when he was hungry. And he did not like sweet foods. But today, Ghanshyam was asking for *pendas.* Taking her ring off her finger, she put it on a stool nearby, and proceeded in preparing dough for chapattis.

Smiling, she said, "If you want to eat *pendas*, go to the confectioner. There are none here."

Ghanshyam said, "Yes, yes, I am going there." With this, he grabbed her ring and ran away. Suvasinibhabhi was startled and ran to catch Ghanshyam. But he could not be caught. He made her run from one room to another and then to another and so on. She threatened, "Your elder brother will beat you for stealing the ring to eat *pendas*." But Ghanshyam replied, "How can you say I have stolen your ring? I took it before your very eyes."


The confectioner is surprised to see all the baskets full.

Bhabhi realized that it was not possible to catch Ghanshyam. So she locked the room door from outside and trapped him inside. But when she turned around, she saw Ghanshyam standing in the courtyard outside, laughing and showing her the ring.

"What is this? I just locked him inside, so how did he come out?" she wondered.

Ghanshyam ran out of the house with the ring and went directly to the confectionery shop. Holding the ring before him he said, "If you give me all the sweets, I will give you this ring."

The confectioner greedily eyed the gold ring. He filled all the sweets in baskets and gave it to Ghanshyam in exchange for the ring. Ghanshyam took the basket and feasted with his friends in a farm.

After a while, Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai returned home. They heard about Ghanshyam's mischief and became angry. At that time Ghanshyam came running inside and sat directly in Bhaktimata's lap.

Rampratapbhai asked him, "Where is the ring, Ghanshyam?"

"I don't know anything about the ring," Ghanshyam replied.

Rampratapbhai slapped him and Ghanshyam broke down crying. Suvasinibhabhi ran and picked up Ghanshyam. Bhaktimata also intervened. Eventually, everyone went to the confectionery shop, together with Ghanshyam. Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai asked the confectioner, "Has Ghanshyam given you a ring?"

The confectioner replied, "I have given him all the sweets in my shop in exchange for the ring. Look inside, everything is empty."

Crying, Ghanshyam said, "No, no, he is lying. I have not taken his sweets. Let us go inside his shop." So, Ghanshyam held Dharmadev's and Rampratapbhai's hands and led them into the shop.

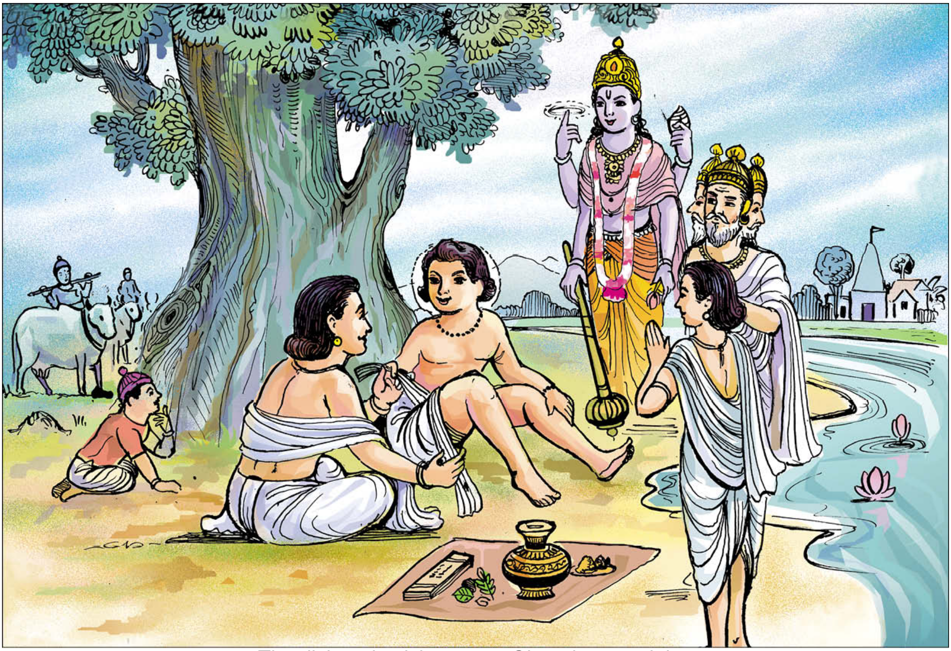
Inside, Ghanshyam said, "See, all the sweets are here. All the baskets are full."

Everyone saw that the baskets of sweets were untouched. The confectioner was surprised on seeing this. He folded his hands and said to Dharmadev, "Dharmadev! This son of yours is very great."

Then, taking the ring, everyone happily returned home.

23. Khampa Talavdi

Once, Ghanshyam went to Targaam with Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi. There was a small forest at a short distance away from the house, and in the middle of it there was a beautiful little pond. The tank was surrounded by green grass and many lovely flowers and trees. Cowhands took their cattle to graze in the surrounding fields. Ghanshyam used to go there every evening to play. He would climb trees, and play hide and seek with his friends. They would also pick roses, jasmine and other flowers. All his friends would make a garland of flowers and put it around Ghanshyam's neck.



The divine physicians treat Ghanshyam 's injury

One evening, Ghanshyam was standing near the pond. The cowhands were returning home with their cows. Ghanshyam called out to the cows, and they all came running, and stood round him. The cowhands tried very hard to call them back, but they would not budge from where they were standing near Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam

patted and caressed the cows for a while, and then said to them, “You can go now.” The cows promptly obeyed, turned around, and went home mooing.

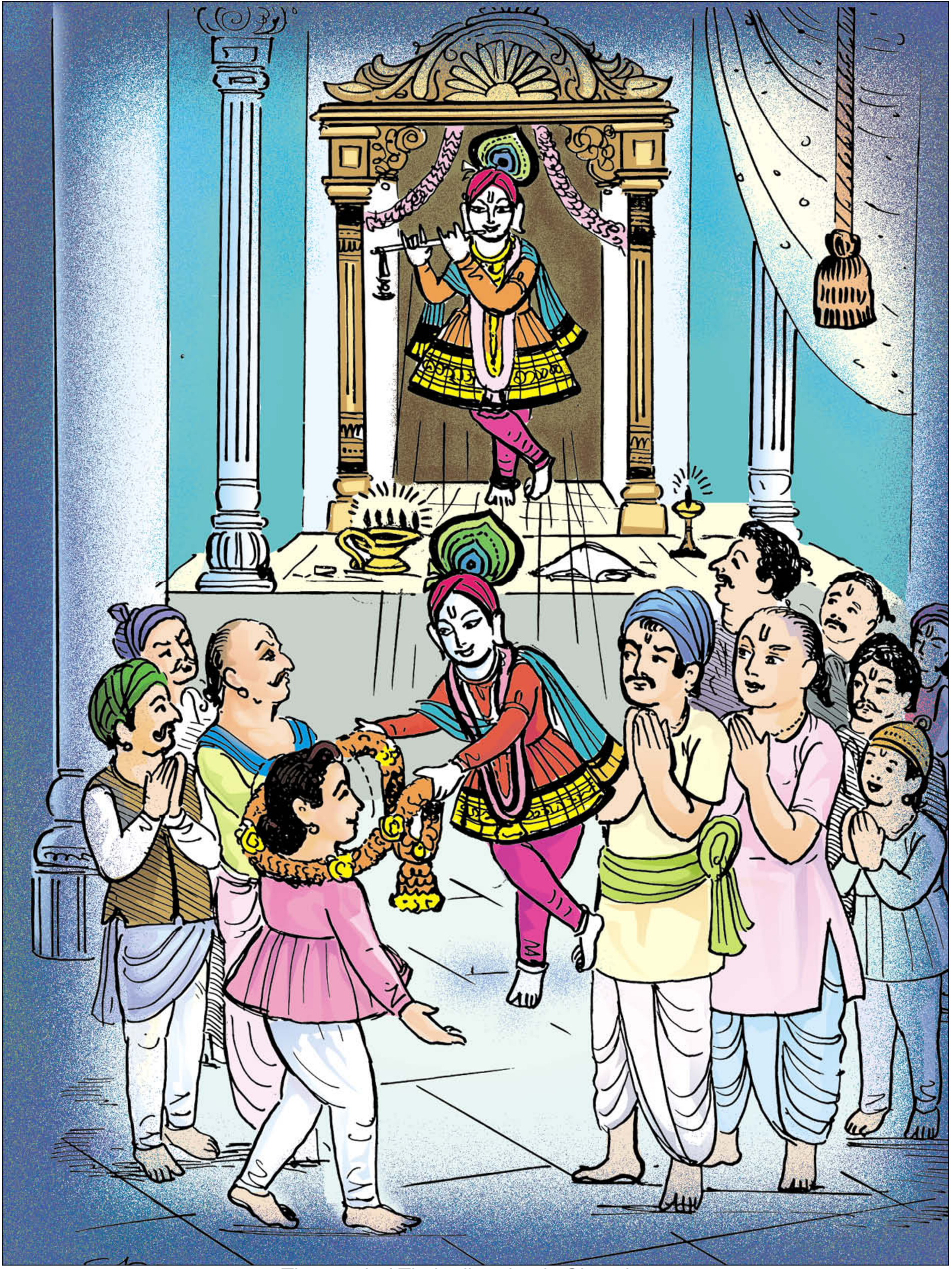
After the cows were gone, Ghanshyam climbed the tamarind tree by the banks of the pond and played there for some time. Then, as he was climbing down, his foot slipped and a sharp broken branch on the tree pierced his right thigh. Ghanshyam fell near the edge of the water with his wound blleeding intensely. This alarmed his friends. One of them, Sukhnandan, ran to call Rampratapbhai. Meanwhile, Indra, Brahma, Vishnu, Chandra and the other *devas* came down from the sky. Indra at once summoned Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the *devas*. Ashwini Kumar came hurriedly and bandaged the wound. Then all the *devas* bowed to Ghanshyam and disappeared into the sky.

Just then, Rampratapbhai arrived on the scene with Sukhanandan. He saw a bandage around Ghanshyam’s thigh, “Who gave you the treatment? Who applied the bandage?” he enquired anxiously. Veni replied, “Ashwini Kumar, the physician of the *devas* came down from the sky, and applied the medicine and bandage.” Rampratapbhai was overjoyed when he heard this. He then took Ghanshyam on his shoulder, and brought him home.

Suvasinibhabhi was waiting anxiously for Ghanshyam. When she saw him, she at once took him in her arms, and embraced him lovingly. Then she asked him, “Where is the injury?” He replied, “I have not been injured at all,” and opened the bandage. Suvasinibhabhi did not see any injury, but there was a faint mark at the spot where the branch had pierced. She was greatly delighted.

Ever since this incident occurred the pond has been known as ‘Khampa Talavdi’; where Khampa means the ‘broken branch’ and Talavadi means ‘pond’.

24. Sixteen Signs of God



The murti of Thakorji garlands Ghanshyam

Once, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata went on a pilgrimage taking their three sons with them. Vasantabai and Chandanmasi also accompanied them. On the way they came to a village called Gunda. It had a small mandir with a small *murti* of Thakorji. In the evening, at *arti* time, Dharmadev took his three sons to the mandir for Thakorji's darshan. The bells rang, the gongs sounded, and the drums rolled. The *arti* of Thakorji began. Ghanshyam was standing in front of the *murti*, doing Thakorji's darshan.

Just then the *murti* of Thakorji stepped down from the throne and came to

Ghanshyam. Thakorji then took off the garland from his own neck and put it around Ghanshyam's neck, then he returned to his throne. The *pujari*, Dharmadev and all the devotees who had come for Thakorji's darshan witnessed the miracle. Soon, news of the miracle spread throughout the whole village.

Eventually, the news reached King Gumansinh. The next morning, the king decided to test Ghanshyam. So he sent a messenger to deliver an order that Dharmadev, with his three sons, should present himself at the king's house at ten o'clock in the morning. Accordingly, Dharmadev arrived with his three sons at the appointed hour.

The king asked Dharmadev, "Which of your three sons is Ghanshyam, who had shown the miracle to all." Dharmadev put his hand on Ghanshyam's head and said, "This is my middle son Ghanshyam."

The king thought to himself, "If Ghanshyam is God incarnate, then two tests will settle the issue. First, it is mentioned in the shastras that God does not cast a shadow. Secondly, they also say that there are sixteen sacred marks on God's feet. So, we can easily decide whether Ghanshyam is really God incarnate or not. If he is not, then surely there is fraud and deception here."

Thinking thus, the king called Dharmadev and Ghanshyam out into the open compound where there was bright sunshine. To the king's amazement Ghanshyam did not have a shadow, whereas Dharmadev had one.

Then the king asked Ghanshyam to sit with his legs stretched out. Ghanshyam sat on a seat with his legs straightened out. On Ghanshyam's right sole there were nine signs, namely, *ashtakon*, *urdhva rekha*, *swastik*, *jambu*, *jav*, *vajra*, *ankush*, *ketu* and *padma*. On the instep of his left foot were seven signs, namely, *trikon, kalash*, *gopad*, *dhanush*, *meen*, *ardhachandra* and *vyom*. Moreover, the *urdhvarekha* or the vertical line on both the feet emerged from between the big toe and the first toe and reached towards the heel. The king was now convinced that Ghanshyam was really God incarnate. His joy knew no bounds.

The Queen, Kunvarba, was also overjoyed and they both bowed at Ghanshyam's feet. Then they ordered a beautiful bed with silk cushions and seated Dharmadev and Ghanshyam on it. Then they worshipped both father and son by applying sandalwood paste and kumkum to their foreheads, and offering flowers. They performed *arti* of Ghanshyam and presented him with a velvet cap embroidered with gold threads and a *surval*. Then they bade them farewell with great respect.

On the third day, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata left on a pilgrimage of other sacred places, along with their three sons. In the course of their journey, they passed through Lucknow and Kanpur, and then headed back to Ayodhya. Ichchharamji was the youngest of the three brothers. He had not yet learnt how to walk with ease. So Vasantabai carried him in her arms, while Ghanshyam walked holding his mother's hand.

Once, on the way, Ghanshyam protested to Bhaktimata "Why does carry Ichchharam have to be carried, and why not me?" Bhaktimata tried to explain to him, "Ichchharam is the youngest and weighs little. He has not even learnt how to walk as yet, whereas you can walk easily. Besides, you are too heavy to lift. So, you should

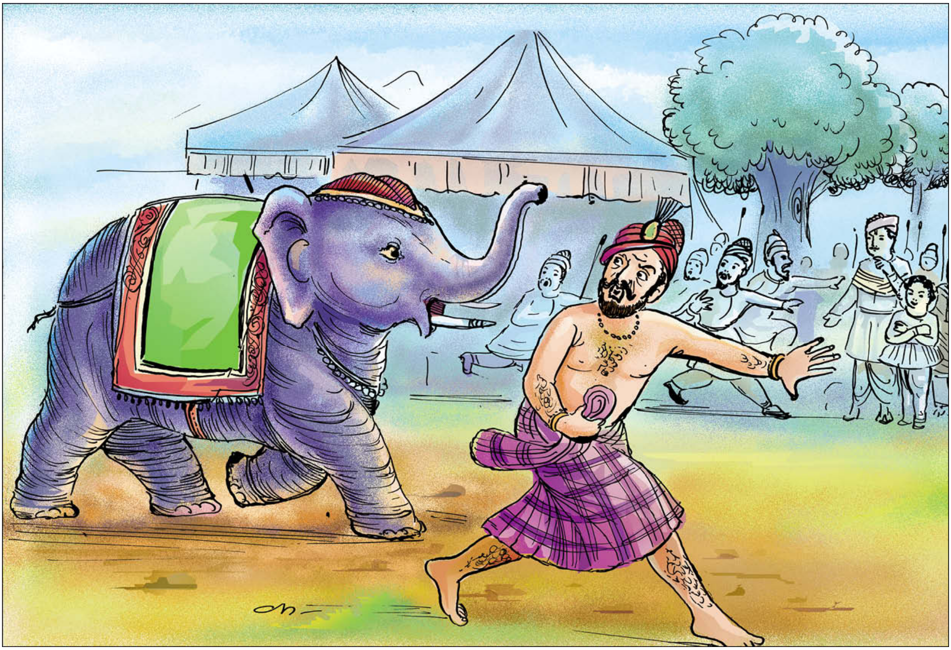
walk.” Ghanshyam still insisted, “I am not heavy at all! I am also very tired now. Actually Ichchharam is heavier than me. So, why does he have to be carried?”

So saying, Ghanshyam used his powers to increase Ichchharam’s weight so that Vasantabai had to put Ichchharam down. She remarked to Bhaktimata, “Why has Ichchharam suddenly become so heavy? He does not feel so heavy every day!”

Bhaktimata smilingly replied, “It is all due to Ghanshyam’s divine power. Since he does not want to walk he has made Ichchharam very heavy. Chandamasi, please carry Ghanshyam in your arms for a while. Then everything will become normal as before.”

Chandamasi lifted Ghanshyam in her arms and carried him. She did not feel any weight at all. And when Vasantabai carried Ichchharam again, she discovered that his weight had become normal. Seeing such pranks of Ghanshyam, Dharmadev and Bhaktimata started laughing.

25. Ghanshyam Stops the Killing



The elephant chases the cruel king

Baldidhar was brother-in-law of Dharmadev. Baldidhar and his brother, Morligangadhar, were both serving as sepoys in the army of the local king.

Once the king’s army came to Ballampadhari village. Dharmadev thought that since Ballampadhari was very near Ayodhya, he would go and see Baldidhar and Morligangadhar. So, he left for Ballampadhari, taking Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai with him.

The king’s army had camped in a garden on the outskirts of Ballampadhari village.

A watchman was standing at the entrance of the garden. Dharmadev told the watchman, “We want to see Baldidhar and Morligangadhar. They are sepoys in the king’s army. Kindly take us to where they are.”

The watchman readily agreed, “Just follow me. I will take you to them.” He then took them to a pipal tree. There was a big tent near the pipal tree. The king was sitting in the tent with some of his men, and had just ordered the killing of some goats, cows and other animals.

Seeing the heartless slaughter going on inside the tent, Dharmadev was overwhelmed with anguish. Ghanshyam saw his father’s grief-stricken face and inquired, “What has happened, father?” Dharmadev pointed to the door of the tent. When Ghanshyam looked inside, he saw animals being butchered. He felt immense pity for the animals. He made a wish to put an end to the killing. The moment he so wished, all the horses and elephants in the king’s army broke loose from their chains and madly rushed towards the tent. While some of the elephants uprooted the tents with their trunks, others rushed inside them.

The whole village was filled with the noise and clamour of neighing horses and trumpeting elephants. The sepoys in the tent ran for their lives. The king, who was sitting in the tent bare-chested, also ran for his life when he saw the mad elephants. Then, while he ran his dhoti became loose, but he managed to hold it in place with his hand. The king hid himself beneath the pipal tree. But the elephant came running towards the tree. On seeing this the king climbed up the tree to safety and the elephant turned and went away.

Then, with his divine powers, Ghanshyam shook the pipal tree vigorously. All the branches shook, and the leaves started falling down. The king trembled with fear. When he looked down, the whole earth seemed to be shaking. At once, he started repenting for his sins, and began to cry loudly. He prayed, “Oh, God! Please save me.” He was afraid that he would soon be thrown off the tree and get killed.

When the king pleaded repeatedly, Ghanshyam, entered the tree and spoke to the king, “You and your army are committing grave sins by killing innocent animals. I am, therefore, very angry with you. If you want to live, take a pledge here and now that you will never kill again. Otherwise, you are doomed. The God to whom you are praying is actually standing opposite this tree next to Dharmadev, in the form of Ghanshyam. Ask him to forgive you and you will be instantly freed.”

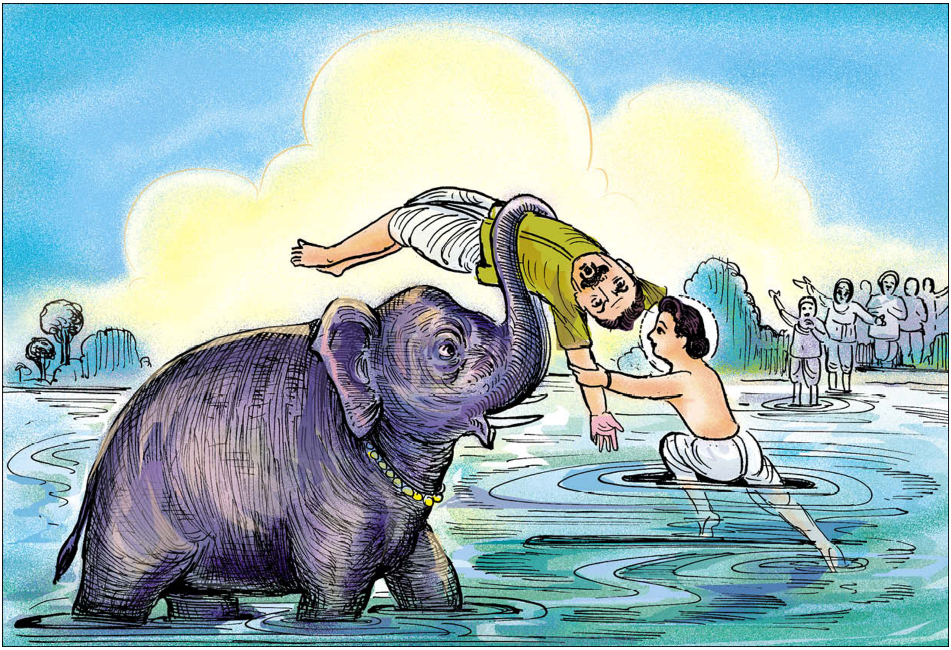
Hearing these words, the king was speechless. He realized that he should obey God’s wishes. And so he vowed that from then on he would never kill any innocent animals or allow anybody else in his army to do so. He pledged, “Oh God! I take a solemn oath that henceforth I shall never kill or allow any killing.” Hearing the king’s prayer, Ghanshyam felt compassion for him. immediately he stopped shaking the pipal tree. All the elephants and horses then went back quietly to their places to eat grass.

The king slowly got down from the tree. He fell to his knees before Ghanshyam and pleaded, “O Ghanshyam! You are God. I am your humble servant. Please forgive my faults and sins. I shall never kill again.”

After the king had spoken Ghanshyam blessed him. The king then bowed to

Ghanshyam and Dharmadev and went back to his tent to rest. Dharmadev then met Baldidhar and Morligangadhar, before returning to Ayodhya with Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai.

26. The Mahout Is Saved


Ghanshyam saves the mahout

There was a very wealthy man named Baldevji who lived in Ayodhya. He had tamed a strong elephant and employed a mahout to look after him. But the mahout daily stole the sweets from the food meant for the elephant, and thus deprived it of some of its daily food.

The elephant saw this day after day. Then one day it became furious. At noon that day the mahout had taken the elephant to the lake, as usual, for a bath. He led the elephant into the water and started scrubbing its body with a tile. Deciding to take revenge, the elephant lifted the mahout with its trunk, and held him high up in the air with the intention of dashing him against the water.

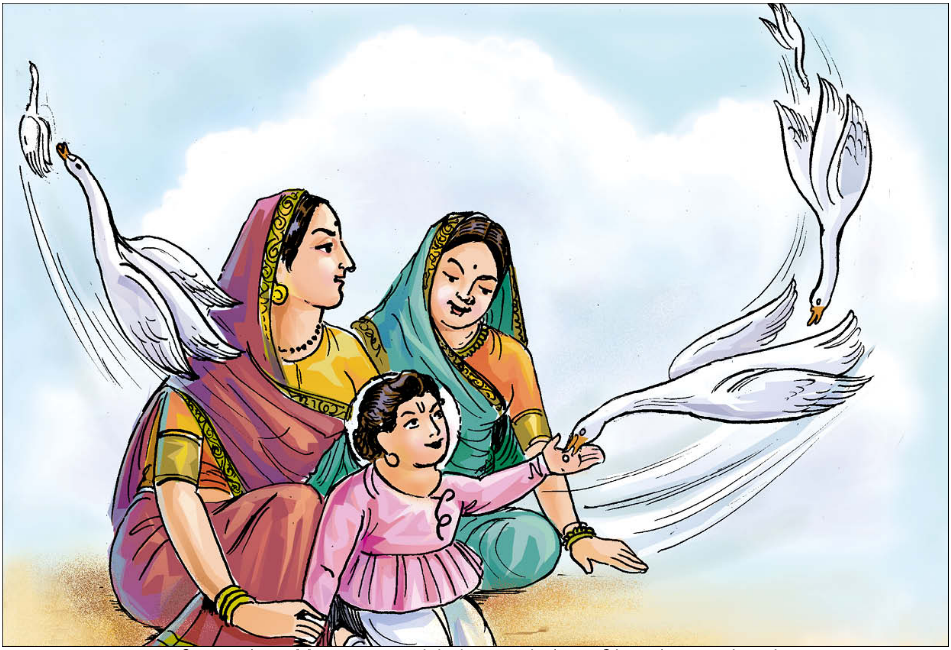
People standing on the banks of the lake saw this and were horrified. Just then, Dharmadev was passing by with Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam saw the disasterr that would befall the mahout and felt compassion for him. So, he at once assumed another form, entered the water, and went up to the elephant. He first freed the mahout from the elephant's trunk. Then he pacified the elephant, gently mounted on it and walked it out of the water.

Once out of the water, the elephant walked like a humble cow. The people on the

banks saw the miracle. They were also amazed to see Ghanshyam in two separate forms. When the elephant came out of the water, the second form of Ghanshyam disappeared. Then the original form of Ghanshyam mounted the elephant and rode it home. There, the mahout ordered the elephant to bend down. When the elephant bent down obediently, Ghanshyam dismounted.

The mahout bowed to Ghanshyam with deep devotion and said, "O Ghanshyam! Had you not calmed the elephant and saved me from its wrath today, I would surely have died. You are God. I shall not henceforth steal its food." Ghanshyam thereupon blessed the mahout and entered his home.

27. A New Set of Teeth



Swans from Mansarovar pick the pearls from Ghanshyam's hand

One day, Ghanshyam told Suvasinibhabhi, "Bhabhi, my molar teeth are paining severely. I cannot chew chapattis. So, please prepare *shiro* for me instead." Suvasinibhabhi said, "Fine."

Shiro was soon ready and Suvasinibhabhi called all the members of the family to eat. She served chapattis to Dharmadev, Rampratapbhai and Ichchharam, while to Ghanshyam she served the soft *shiro*. Ghanshyam gave some *shiro* to his younger brother, Ichchharam. Then he ate just one or two morsels of *shiro*, leaving the rest on the plate. Thereafter Ghanshyam washed his hands. Seeing this, Suvasinibhabhi called him out into the courtyard behind the kitchen, and enquired, "Dear brother! Is your molar tooth giving you too much trouble?"

Ghanshyam replied, “Yes, Bhabhi, it is paining a lot. It is also loose. If you pull out all the loose teeth then it will lessen my pain.” So saying, he opened his mouth and, with his divine powers, loosened all his teeth. Suvasinibhabhi put her fingers into his mouth to pull out the loose molar tooth. Quickly she pulled it out. Then Ghanshyam said to her, “Bhabhi, this other tooth is also loose and gives me a lot of pain, please pull it out too.” Thus, one by one, Ghanshyam had all his teeth removed. When Suvasinibhabhi saw the toothless mouth of Ghanshyam she became worried. She called out to Bhaktimata and, pointing to Ghanshyam’s mouth, told her, “Mother, Ghanshyam complained to me that he had a toothache, and that his teeth were loose. So, he made me pull them all out. Now how will he eat?” When Bhaktimata saw the little heap of teeth, she too became worried. She told Ghanshyam, “Open your mouth.” When Ghanshyam opened his mouth, both she and Suvasinibhabhi were stunned at what they saw. Ghanshyam already had a new set of teeth in his mouth. Both, Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi, were astonished and overjoyed at the miracle.

Then Ghanshyam picked up the teeth lying on the ground. Suvasinibhabhi made him open his fist, and she saw there were pearls instead of teeth! Ghanshyam raised his hand and a flock of swans from Manasarovar swooped down from the sky. One by one, they picked up the pearls from Ghanshyam’s hand and flew away.

On seeing this divine episode Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi realized once more that Ghanshyam was indeed God incarnate and humbly bowed to him.

28. A Feast for His Friends

The eight Siddhis serve Ghanshyam and his friends

Once, in Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam took his friends out to play on the banks of Meen lake. They were so engrossed in their game, that they did now know it was already 4.00 pm. Veni, Prag, Sukhanandan were all hungry. They thought of hurrying home to eat. Ghanshyam was, of course, aware of what was going on in their minds. So he asked them, "Are you all very hungry?" All of them replied, "Yes!"

Then Ghanshyam proposed, "If you do as I ask, I shall feed all of you here." The friends readily agreed, "Oh yes, we are ready. We are prepared to do whatever you ask. But you will have to give us enough food." Ghanshyam then said, "If you agree to play with me till sunset, I shall certainly feed you all." The friends all replied, "Yes, yes. We'll play."

Ghanshyam then took out his handkerchief and tied it to a branch of the mango tree nearby, and told his friends, "Come on, let us go to Meen lake for a bath. This handkerchief of mine will be filled with sweets in a short while." All of them then went to Meen lake for a bath. They played in the water for a long time. Then Ghanshyam called them out, "Come on everyone, out of the water. It will soon be dark. Then my elder brother will scold me for being late." So all of them came out of the water, dried themselves and put on their clothes.

Then Veniram reminded Ghanshyam, "Ghanshyam, you told us you would feed us sweets. So bring the sweets. We are very hungry." Ghanshyam replied, "Oh sure! Come on, let us climb the mango tree. The sweets have been kept there." So all of them ran to the mango tree and, one by one, they climbed up. Ghanshyam went to the branch to which he had tied his handkerchief. Then he started serving delicious sweets from the

handkerchief to all his friends. His friends wondered how the sweets got into the handkerchief. Ghanshyam read their thoughts, and he issued an order. Within seconds eight celestial maidens descended from the sky with plates full of food in their hands. They were the eight Siddhis, and all of them were very beautiful. Each one had a gold plate in one hand in which there were thirty-two items. In the other hand, they had a gold water pot full of cool drinking water. Ghanshyam told all his friends to get down and sit in a circle.

The eight Siddhis then started serving the delicious food, while singing the praises of Ghanshyam. All the boys ate to their heart's content and drank the cool water. Then the Siddhis bowed to Ghanshyam and disappeared into the sky. By then the sun had set. All the children returned home with Ghanshyam, happily dancing and singing.

29. Thousands Are Fed and Humbled

The bawas are given grains

Once, a band of roaming sannyasis came to Chhapaiya, and camped on the banks of Khampa pond. The group consisted of a thousand *bawas* and sannyasis. Some of them had matted hair; some had only a tuft of hair on their heads; yet others had long beards, while some had shaven heads. Most of the sannyasis carried tongs in their hands, while some had spears. There were some who had swords, while others had long sticks or daggers.

When the band settled down near the pond, they beat their drums, blew their

conches, and and played their pipes, filling the air with music. Within no time they set up their tents, and went to bathe in the pond.

Ghanshyam, taking his friends Veni, Madhav, Prag and others with him, went to have a look at the *bawas*. After taking their bath, five leading *bawas* proceeded to Chhapaiya village to find provisions for the whole group. Meanwhile, the village chief, Motibhai Tarvadi, fearing that it would not be possible to collect enough provisions for so many *bawas*, had run away to another village.

The *bawas* came to the village and enquired, “Who is Dharmadev?” The villagers directed them to Dharmadev’s house. When they reached Dharmadev’s house, they made a loud clatter with their tongs and spoke arrogantly, “We are a band of a thousand *bawas*. We have camped on the bank of Khampa pond. We want grains and vegetables for cooking our food.”

On hearing their demand Dharmadev replied politely, “Listen, in my house I do not have enough grains, ghee and other provisions to feed a thousand *bawas*. If you like, I can give you enough for about a hundred. Also, almost all our food stocks in the house are exhausted. So, please take what I can give you and collect the rest from the village.”

But the *bawas* were not ready to accept this. They struck their tongs harder and more angrily and declared, “No, no, we will not go to anybody else. You are the greatest gentleman in this village. So you will have to give. Don’t tell lies. Give us what we want now.”

Hearing this, Dharmadev was greatly worried. He did not know what to do. When Ghanshyam came to know about his father’s position, he immediately came home, and asked, “What has happened, father? Why are you worried?” Dharmadev told him about the *bawas*. Ghanshyam reassured his father at once, “Don’t worry at all, father. Start taking out grains from our store. They won’t get exhausted.”

So he asked Suvasinibhabhi to draw grains, flour, gur, ghee, etc. out of the large storage vessels. The more she took the more there was. She never reached the bottom. In a short time, there was a huge heap of various provisions. The *bawas* were overjoyed, and began to praise Dharmadev. As they got sufficient grains for over a thousand people, they blessed Dharmadev and went away. Dharmadev wondered, “From where did such a large quantity of supplies arrive? Now, not a single grain would be left in the house.” With this thought he looked into the vessels, and to his joy and surprise he found that all of them were full as before. It seemed as if nothing had been taken away. He knew at once that this was yet another of Ghanshyam’s miracle.

In the evening Ghanshyam went with his father to see the *bawas*’ camp on the banks of Khampa pond. Going around the place, they came to a small tent. Inside, a *bawa* was sitting on a tiger skin. He was ill-tempered and arrogant. He started debating with Dharmadev. When he was clearly defeated in the discussion, he started swearing.

Ghanshyam thought that the *bawa* should be taught a lesson. He told his father, “Father, I want that tiger skin on which the *bawa* is sitting.” Hearing this, the *bawa* shouted, “What are you talking about kid?” Dharamadev tried to explain as softly as he could, “My son, Ghanshyam, wants that tiger skin.” The *bawa* blared out angrily,

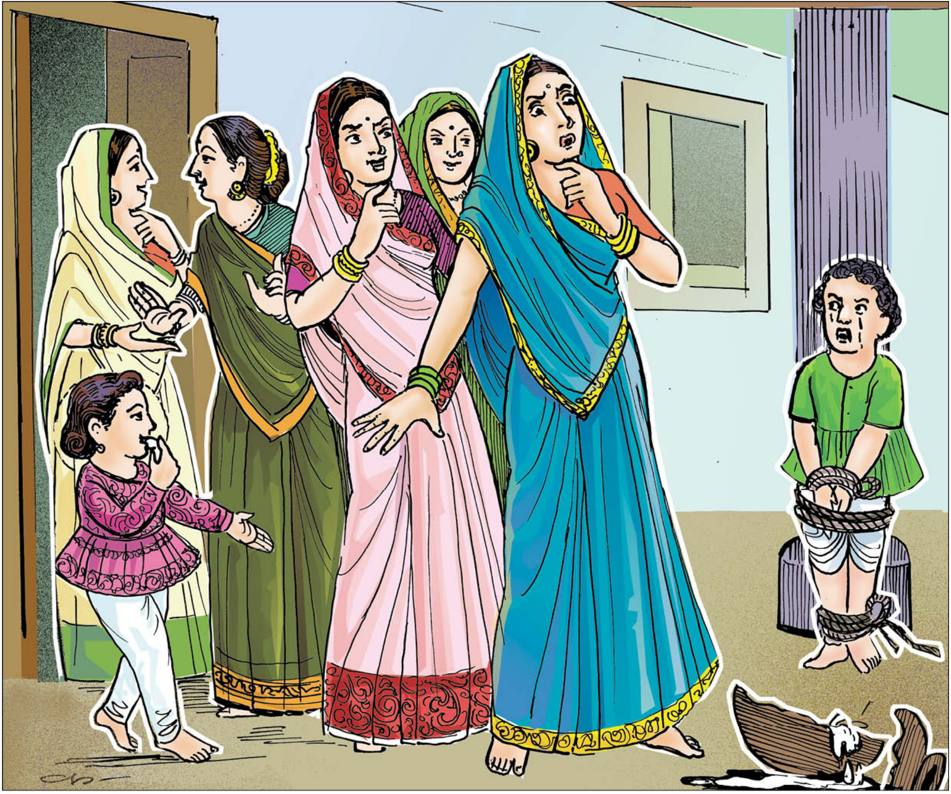
"What nonsense! It will cost you three hundred rupees!" Hearing this Ghanshyam thought, "A true *bawa* who has renounced everything should not be egoistic, never lose his temper and should not keep money. So, he should be taught a lesson." Then he so willed that a real tiger spring up from the tiger skin. The *bawa* ran for his life and the tiger ran after him to devour him. The *bawa* shouted, "Oh God! I am finished. I am finished. Run all of you! Run for your lives! There is a tiger here." Hearing his cries, the other *bawas* scattered in all directions, frightened to death. They left their arm, water-pots, wooden sandals and fled, leaving everything behind. There was panic and shouting all through the camp.

Then Ghanshyam called the tiger to him, patted it on the back and pacified it. Thereafter he called at the *bawas* and told them, "Don't be afraid. The tiger will not harm anyone. I materialized this tiger just to humble an arrogant *bawa*." Hearing Ghanshyam's assurance, the *bawas* came back, still feeling frightened.

The *bawa* who had provoked the incident was still trembling all over. All of them prostrated before Ghanshyam and asked for forgiveness, "We have erred. You are God. We insulted you and your father. Please forgive us." Ghanshyam forgave them. He ordered the tiger to go away, and it disappeared at once into the jungle.

Then Dharmadev and Ghanshyam returned to the village, and the *bawas* folded up their tents, took their belongings, and left for Ayodhya.

30. Lakshmibai Sees a Miracle



Lakshmibai finds Veni tied up instead of Ghanshyam

In Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam would often go along with his friends to one or the other of his neighbour's houses to have a little fun. The boys would enter the house secretly, take the earthen pot from a basket suspended from the ceiling, and enjoy a feast of milk, curd, *makhan* or whatever else was in the pot.

One day, Ghanshyam accompanied his friend, Veniram, to his house. When they got to Veniram's house, they saw Lakshmibai, his mother, sitting outside in the courtyard, separating chaff from the grain. Ghanshyam and Veniram played around for some time, and then quietly entered the house. Then they slipped into the kitchen. There they took *makhan* from a pot, mixed sugar in it, and began to eat the mixture with relish. Suddenly, Lakshmibai came into the kitchen and saw them eating the sweetened *makhan*. Seeing Lakshmibai, Ghanshyam and Veniram jumped out of the window and ran away.

Lakshmibai was furious. She at once went to Bhaktimata's house and complained to her, "Mother, your Ghanshyam comes daily to my house to steal. He enters the house silently, goes into the kitchen and eats ghee, milk, curd, *makhan* and other food. Besides, he spoils my son by teaching him to steal. I saw it all with my own eyes today. Why don't you tell your son off?"

Bhaktimata quietly replied, "My Ghanshyam would never steal anything. He is a very well behaved boy and always obedient to me. On the other hand your Veni very often comes to my house, and eats whatever he can lay his hands on when no one is

looking. At times he even takes things from my house, still we have never complained. And you have come to complain about Ghanshyam. I cannot believe what you say about him. If you see Ghanshyam stealing next time, catch him, tie his hands and feet, and call me. Only thereafter shall I believe you."

"All right. But I am not lying. Now, if Ghanshyam comes to my house again, I shall tie his hands and feet, and show you. I shall prove to the whole village that Ghanshyam is a thief, and not the good boy, as people think," replied Lakshmibai. Then she went away to her own house.

When Ghanshyam heard about this, he thought that Lakshmibai should be taught a lesson.

One afternoon, Ghanshyam, along with Veniram, entered the latter's house by the back door. They saw that Lakshmibai was having a nap. So, they went straight to the kitchen, took the earthen-pot and ate all the curd in it. Unfortunately for the boys, Lakshmibai woke up just at that moment, as she heard some rattling noise in the kitchen. Thinking that it might be a cat she hurried to the kitchen.

There she saw curd stuck to the lips of Ghanshyam and Veniram, and the pot which they had emptied. She let her son, Veniram, escape, but caught hold of Ghanshyam. "Today, I have caught you in the very act of stealing. I shall make a full complaint. I shall let the whole village know that the yogurt thief has been caught." Lakshmibai then tied Ghanshyam's hands and feet tightly with a cord.

Flushed with victory, she shouted to everyone she met, "Come and see, I have caught the thief." She then went to Bhaktimata and told her how she had at last caught Ghanshyam. "Today I have caught the thief and tied his hands and feet. Everyday he comes and steals, and eats all the good things in the kitchen. Come, I will show you how well behaved your son is." She then took Bhaktimata and all the neighbours to her house.

While Lakshmibai was away, Ghanshyam used his divine powers to free himself from the ropes and bind Veniram's hands and feet instead. He then slipped out and reached home by a different route.

Soon Lakshmibai came to her house, bringing all the neighbours along. Little did she suspect the transformation that had taken place. She opened the door of the kitchen and declared without looking, "Look at Ghanshyam, the thief." But what Bhaktimata and the others saw was Veniram who had been bound with ropes and not Ghanshyam! All the neighbours began to laugh and said, "What a fool this woman is! She has tied up her own son, Veniram, and has brought us to see him."

Hearing the laughter, Lakshmibai turned round, and saw that Veniram, and not Ghanshyam, was bound with ropes. She felt terribly embarrassed. Just then, eating gur from his hands, Ghanshyam came to Lakshmibai's house as if on a casual visit. With a mischievous glint in his eyes, he enquired, "What has happened, mother?"

Bhaktimata took him aside and laughed at the spectacle. All the neighbours too went back chuckling to themselves over Lakshmibai's loss of face.

When she was alone, Lakshmibai began to wonder about the episode. She thought, "There is no doubt that it was Ghanshyam whom I had caught, and whose hands and

feet I had bound. Certainly Ghanshyam must be a miraculous child. Ghanshyam must be God. Only then is this possible." By now she had freed Veniram. When Lakshmibai saw the truth, she went to Bhaktimata. She begged for forgiveness for her ignorance and bowed to Ghanshyam with the faith that he is God.

31. The Importance of Ekadashi

It was the day of Ekadashi. Ghanshyam got up very early, bathed, performed puja and went for darshan to the Hanuman Gadhi mandir. Mohandas, the mahant of the mandir, was narrating the story of Ram from the Ramcharit Manas. In the course of the story, he read the glory of observing Ekadashi, "If we observe one Ekadashi, we obtain merits equal to the merits obtained by performing a thousand Ashwamedh Yagnas."

Hearing this, Ghanshyam asked, "Mahantji if that is so then why is it that so many people do not observe Ekadashi?"

Mohandas gave a long explanation, "God has given us this rare human body. Why then should we inflict suffering on this precious body by fasting on Ekadashi? This body has not been given for suffering pain and misery. Since the observance of Ekadashi was given up in Jagannathpuri people have stopped doing it. People believe that to remain hungry is to inflict suffering on one's *atma*. So, we should eat and drink to nourish our body. Today only those who do not have anything to eat or drink observe Ekadashi. So little boy, bear this in mind. Don't make your body suffer by fasting."

Ghanshyam thought, "The *bawa* is misleading the people by spreading false beliefs. So he should be taught the truth."

So Ghanshyam said to him, "*Bawaji*, do not preach such wrong talks. It is a sin to talk against the scriptures. There is much glory in the observance of Ekadashi. So, one should observe Ekadashi wholeheartedly."

The *bawa* was annoyed at Ghanshyam, "You, little one, you have the audacity to teach me my duty? Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

Ghanshyam simply fixed his eyes on the *bawa*, who immediately went into samadhi. He found himself transported to Yampuri. There he was severely beaten by the servants of Yama. They scolded him, "You have never observed Ekadashi, and have fattened yourself by eating and drinking merrily. Also, you have misguided other people. So today we will not let you go." Thus, they thrashed him even more soundly.

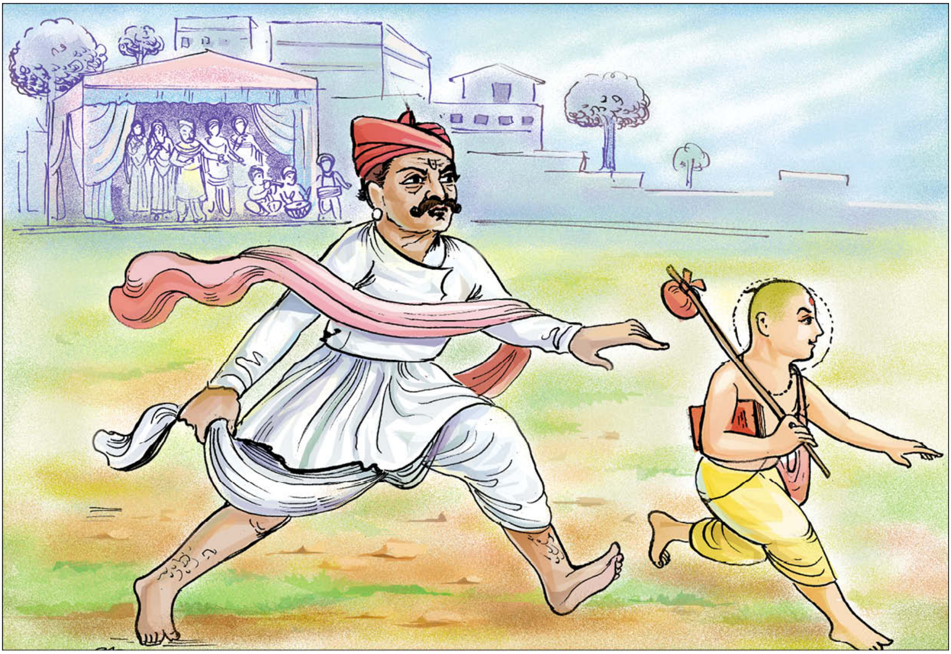
In the mandir, the body of the *bawa* began to toss about, and he screamed, "Save me please, save me. Yama's servants are beating me. They are punishing me because I do not observe Ekadashi." The heavy beating made the *bawa* ache all over. After a while he emerged from samadhi. Immediately, he prostrated himself at the feet of Ghanshyam.

The *bawa* then addressed the assembly, "Listen everyone this Ghanshyam is not just a little boy. He is God supreme! I ignored him. I did not explain the truth, so I had to

suffer a beating in Yampuri. My bones and ribs are still aching. I was punished in Yampuri because I have not observed Ekadashi all these years. I, therefore, pledge today before Ghanshyam that I shall from now, regularly observe Ekadashi in the proper way. Also, I shall preach to the people to do the same. And you all should begin observing Ekadashi from today."

Having said this, the *bawa* prostrated at the feet of Ghanshyam, seated him on his own seat, worshipped him, and begged to be forgiven. All those present also bowed to Ghanshyam, and went home with the resolution that they would fast on Ekadashi. Ghanshyam then blessed the *bawa* and returned home.

32. Ghanshyam Is Given the Sacred Thread



Vashrambhai chases Ghanshyam during the ceremonial run

Ghanshyam was now nearly seven years old. Bhaktimata thought it was time to give him the sacred thread. So, she sent for a Brahmin named Harikrishna Upadhyay. He was the main priest of the whole village. He was a very pure and simple Brahmin. When he received the call, he at once took his book, put on his turban, covered himself with a *khes* and came to Dharmadev's house.

Dharmadev received him with due respect, and gave him an appropriate seat. He then said to the Brahmin, "We want to give the sacred thread to our son, Ghanshyam. Please fix an auspicious day for the ceremony." Harikrishna Upadhyay put on his spectacles, arranged his *khes* comfortably, and then, opened his book and began to count on his fingers. After making his calculations, he declared Monday, 17 March

1788 CE (Fagan *sud* 10, Samvat 1844) to be an auspicious day for the thread giving ceremony.

Accordingly, Dharmadev began his preparations for the sacred thread ceremony. He sent out invitations to all relatives, sadhus and Brahmins. He had the whole of Barhatta Street of Ayodhya beautifully decorated, the house painted anew, and pictures of birds and deer and other animals drawn on the walls. A large shamiana was set up beneath a neem tree outside the house. Beautiful *rangoli* patterns using coloured powder were drawn on the floor. A colourful tree of glass was made and placed in the middle of the ground, with a *divo* at its centre. Small mirrors were hung around the tree reflecting a myriad of lights. Decorative glass pieces and chandeliers of different shapes and sizes were fixed all around. Velvet cloths of different colours and arches of *asopalav* leaves added to the splendour of the shamiana. Everyone was wonderstruck by the glittering splendour.

From early morning on 17 March (tenth day of the bright half of Fagan), Dharmadev's house resounded with the melodious tunes of *shahanai* and women singing bhajans. Harikrishna Upadhyay, the priest, along with other Brahmins, began to chant the sacred Vedic mantras while offering ghee, grains, sesame, etc. into the *yagna*. The main priest recited mantras as Ghanshyam took a pledge before the fire-god. Then Rambali, the barber, was called, and Ghanshyam had his head shaved. He then had a bath and put on a yellow silk *pitamber*.

Ghanshyam then entered the *yagna* arena, bowed to his parents and offered oblations. Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and other gods descended from the sky for darshan. Flowers were showered from the sky. Ghanshyam then received the guru-mantra, put on the clothes of a celibate, tied a waistband, and held a blade of *moonj* grass in his hand. He also held a stick of a *palash* tree and a begging bowl in his hands. He then asked for alms from his mother, and gave what he received to the priest. By this time it was noon. Then the main ceremony for donning the sacred thread took place. In the afternoon, he put on the clothes of a young boy (*batuk*), and went to the village square for a ceremonial run.

His maternal uncle, Vashrambhai, stood in front. Behind them stood Dharmadev and other relatives. And last of all, the women, who were singing bhajans. All stood in the square facing north. All of them thought that when Ghanshyam ran, his maternal uncle would quickly catch him and bring him back. But Ghanshyam had other thoughts, "I want to liberate innumerable souls in this world. I shall, therefore, run directly to the Himalayas. My maternal uncle will never be able to catch me. Then, from the Himalayas, I shall travel everywhere to liberate people."

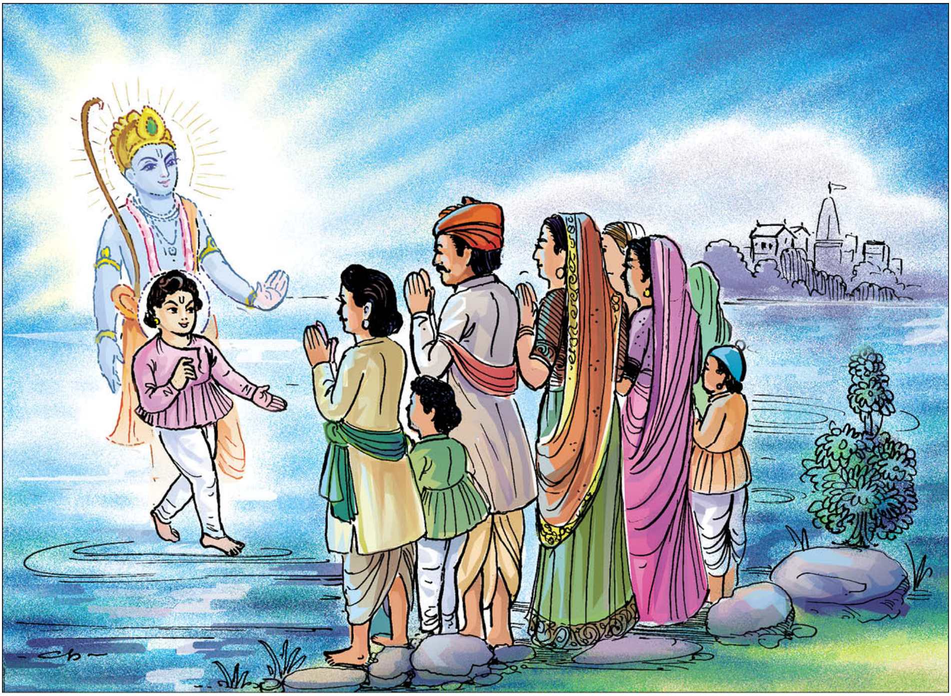
With these thoughts in his mind, Ghanshyam started to run, followed by his maternal uncle. His uncle ran very fast, but he could not catch Ghanshyam and felt exhausted. He praised Ghanshyam's prowess as a runner, and prayed to him, "Oh Ghanshyam! Please allow me to catch you and maintain my honour. Your parents will be pained if you go away."

Hearing his uncle's prayer, Ghanshyam thought, "My parents are pure and innocent. I should not leave them." So he returned. Vashrambhai was overjoyed to see him come

back. He lifted him on his shoulders and brought him back to the *yagna* arena, to everyone's relief. He gave five rupees to Ghanshyam, which Ghanshyam handed over to his father. Ghanshyam then bowed to all. Finally, sitting by the side of his mother, he ate his meal consisting of ghee, gur and rice. It was the last ritual of the day.

Dharmadev fed the Brahmins and sadhus, gifted them clothes and money, and bade them a warm farewell.

33. Ghanshyam Is Seen as Ramchandra


Ghanshyam walks on the water

One afternoon, Ghanshyam took his friends to Meen Lake in Chhapaiya to bathe. All the boys jumped into the water at once for a swim. Ghanshyam proposed, "Let us play catch in the water." So the game began and the boys began to chase and catch each other. But, try as they might, no one could catch Ghanshyam. He swam very fast, dived deep into the water, and reappeared far away. After playing in this way for some time, Ghanshyam dived to the bottom and sat on the bed of the lake. He did not come up for some time. His friends began to worry. They wondered, "Where could Ghanshyam be? Has he drowned or has he been swallowed by a crocodile?"

At that time a washerman named Manchha was washing clothes on the bank of the lake. Ghanshyam's friends ran to him for help, "We cannot find our friend Ghanshyam. He has not come out of the water. Either he has drowned, or a crocodile may have eaten him. We ask you to dive into the water and find him out."

The washerman plunged into the water, dived deep and carried out a wide search on all sides. But he could find no trance of Ghanshyam. At last, completely exhausted, the washerman came up to the surface, and told the boys, “Go to the village to bring Ghanshyam’s father here and tell him everything.”

One of the boys ran to Dharmadev’s house, and told him the story. Dharmadev was greatly upset at the news. He took Bhaktimata, Rampratap, Vashrambhai and other villagers with him to Meen Lake without delay. They stood on the bank worried about what to do. Deep down in the water, Ghanshyam thought, “My parents are worrying, so I should come out of the water.” With this thought, he came up to the surface. His father, mother and all the rest felt relieved and happy at the sight of Ghanshyam.

Thereafter, Ghanshyam started walking on the water towards the bank. The people looking out from the bank had a vision, not of Ghanshyam, but of Lord Ramchandra. They were astonished. Ghanshyam arrived on the bank, bowed to his father and mother and said, “Why were you so worried? I was only sitting at the bottom of the lake to do my work.”

Bhaktimata hugged Ghanshyam, and all of them walked back happily to the village.

34. Sailing on Stone Slabs

Sailing on the stone slabs

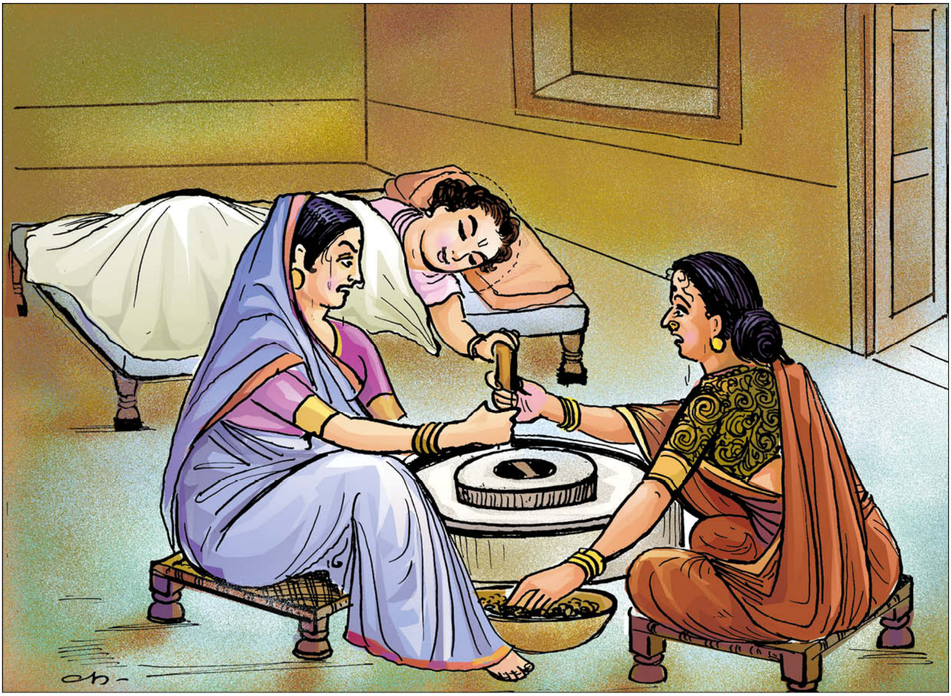
Soon it was the month of Chaitra. Dharmadev accompanied by Rampratap, Ichchharam, Suvasinibhabhi, Bhaktimata, Ghanshyam and other villagers, left for Ayodhya. On the way was the river Saryu. The river was very wide as well as very

deep. To reach Ayodhya people had to go by boat across the river. But only one boat was available. And it could take only a few passengers at a time, so the river bank was crowded with people waiting to cross.

Ghanshyam told the boatman, "We want a separate boat. Can you provide one?" The boatman replied, "You will have to pay more if you want to reserve the whole boat. Are you willing?" Ghanshyam replied, "We will not give you more. We will only pay the normal fare." But the boatman refused. So, Ghanshyam turned to Dharmadev and others and said, "All of you follow me."

Ghanshyam took them to a place a short distance away, where there were some large stone slabs. He asked his mother, father, Suvasinibhabhi, Ichchharam and other villagers from Chhapaiya to sit on one of the bigger slabs, while he and Rampratapbhai sat on a smaller one. Then as he touched both the slabs with his right hand, they began to move over the water just like a real boat. People standing on the bank and the boatman were all bewildered at the strange sight of the stone slabs sailing on the water like proper boats. All were convinced that the little boy could be none other than Lord Ramchandra himself. They bowed to Ghanshyam from the river bank. The two stone slabs soon reached the opposite side. There they got down and, led by Dharmadev, proceeded towards Ayodhya.

35. Miracle Shown to Aunts



Ghanshyam stops the grinding machine

Once, Bhaktimata's sisters, Vasantabai and Chandanbai came to stay with her in Chhapaiya. Vasantabai brought her son, Manekdhar, along with her, and Chandanbai brought her son, Basti, too. As soon as they arrived they asked, "Where is Ghanshyam?" They were very anxious to see him. Bhaktimata replied, "He has gone to Firojpur. But he will be back soon." That same evening, Ghanshyam and Ichchharam returned home, along with Dharmadev. The two aunts gave Ghanshyam and Ichchharam *patasa*, which they had specially brought for them. Then after having supper everyone retired to sleep.

Early next morning, Chandanmasi and Vasantamasi began to grind grains into flour on the stone grinder. Chandanmasi thought that since it was early morning, it would be proper to sing morning bhajans. So, while grinding, she began to sing one of Tulsidas's morning bhajans, "*Utho Lal prabhat bhaya hai* (Get up my Dear it is already morning)." Ghanshyam, who was sleeping in a nearby bed, spoke up, "Aunty, I am fully awake. Why do you ask me to get up? What do you want?" On hearing this, the aunts said, "We are not asking you to get up. We are waking up the Lord."

Thereupon, Ghanshyam, while still lying in his bed, stretched out his hand, and pressed it against the handle of the grinder. The grinder came to a sudden halt. The aunts tried hard to turn it, but it would not move. The aunts were perplexed. Ghanshyam then suggested to them, "Aunty, say that you are waking me up. The God whom you are asking to wake up from his sleep is the same as the one who has placed his hand on this grinder." But the words seemed so silly that the aunts did not pay any heed to what he said. Instead, they tried harder to remove Ghanshyam's hand from the handle of the grinder, but to no avail. The hand would not move even an inch.

Meanwhile, Bhaktimata entered the room with a lighted lamp in her hand. Both the aunts began to complain, "Sister, please ask Ghanshyam to take his hand off the grinder. We are not able to remove his hand." Bhaktimata turned to her son and said, "Ghanshyam, take off your hand." When Ghanshyam heard his mother's order, he said, "Mother, please ask the aunts whom they were trying to wake up?" When they heard Ghanshyam's complaint, the aunts relented, and to pacify Ghanshyam they said, "All right, all right, it is you we are waking up. Now allow us to carry on with the grinding."

Ghanshyam explained, "Had you said the truth in the very beginning, the grinder would not have stopped, and the work would not have been delayed." The aunts replied, "You are God. We realized just now when you showed us your divine power. We ask your forgiveness." So saying, they bowed to Ghanshyam.

36. Ghanshyam Eats All the Food

Ghanshyam shows Bhaktimata the utensils full of food

After arriving in Ayodhya, the festival of Ram Navmi was not too far off. Dharmadev decided to celebrate the festival in his own house with great joy. He sent out invitations to his friends and relatives. Many friends and relatives from the surrounding villages gladly responded to his call, and came a day earlier. The next day they celebrated Ram Navmi with discourses, prayers and singing of bhajans.

On the day after the festival, Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi got up early in the morning and cooked food for the whole family as they were all breaking their fast that day. Ghanshyam, too, woke up early with his mother and finished all his morning rituals. When the food was ready, Bhaktimata placed a large plate full of all the delicacies before Thakorji to sanctify the food.

On seeing this, Ghanshyam told his mother, "I am very hungry." So, his mother took a little of each delicacy and prepared a dish for Ghanshyam. Within minutes, Ghanshyam emptied his plate. Then he began eating from the plate offered to Thakorji, and soon finished everything. He then ate all the food in the other vessels, drank some water and left the kitchen.

When Bhaktimata returned to the kitchen, she found to her horror that all the food had disappeared, and all the plates were empty. Rushing out of the kitchen, she begged Dharmadev, "Please hurry to the market again and bring pulses, rice, flour, vegetables, ghee, and gur, because Ghanshyam has eaten up all the food prepared for everyone. I shall have to cook everything again. So please bring all the necessary provisions

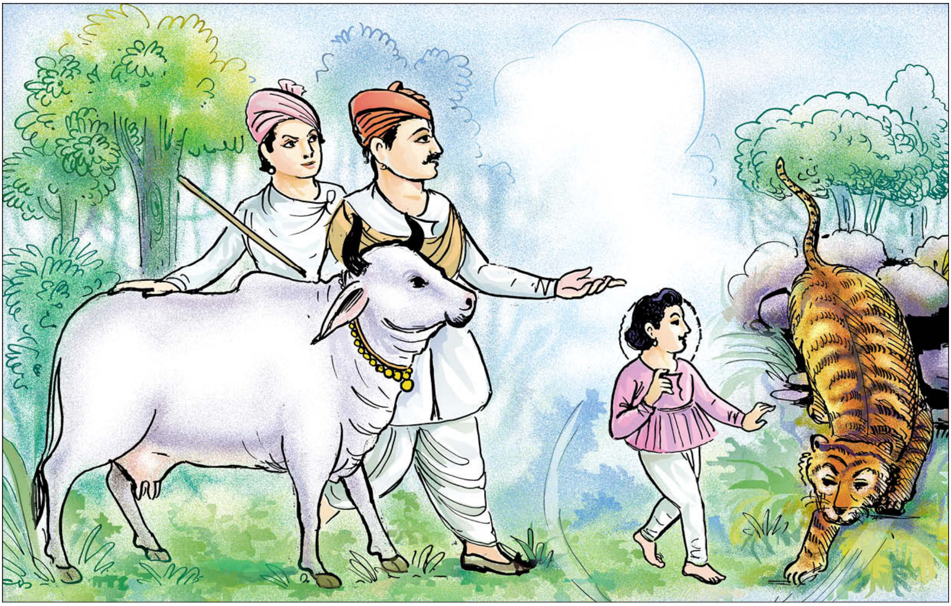
quickly. Otherwise, what will we feed the guests?"

When Ghanshyam heard this, he said, "Mother, all the food is there just as it was. I have not taken anything. Come, I will show you." But, Bhaktimata insisted, "Suvasinibhabhi and I have just been inside and have seen everything. You have emptied all the vessels."

Ghanshyam was no less insistent, "No, no. Just come with me and have a look." So saying, he pulled Bhaktimata by the hand and led her to the kitchen.

A surprised Bhaktimata saw, as Ghanshyam had assured her, that all the utensils were as full as ever. Seeing such a miracle, all she could do was to embrace her son with great affection. Dharmadev was also very happy. When the guests came, he fed them generously and then bade them farewell.

37. In Search of Gauri, the Cow



Ghanshyam calms the tiger

Dharmadev kept a number of cows. One of them was named Gomti, and she was very dear to Ghanshyam. Gomti had two calves, Gauri and Kapila.

Every morning, the cowherd took Dharmadev's cows for grazing. He grazed them all day long, and brought them home in the evening. One day, however, on coming home, he found that all the cows had returned except Gauri. Deeply worried, the cowherd rushed back to the grazing field, and searched everywhere, but could find no trace of Gauri. He then came back, very downcast, and informed Dharmadev about it.

The sun had already set. But Dharmadev, along with Rampratapbhai and Ghanshyam, went out in search of Gauri. They searched all the surrounding fields, but

could not find Gauri. They even went into the jungle, which was a short distance from the field, in the hope of finding her there.

By now, night had descended, but soft light from a full moon brightened the scene around. The three of them searched deep into the jungle, but none could find any trace of Gauri. In a last desperate attempt, Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai called Gauri's name aloud several times. To their delight Gauri appeared from out of the thick bush and came running
and mooing to its masters. Ghanshyam affectionately patted her on the head.

Taking Gauri with them, they began their weary journey back home through the jungle. After they had walked for some time, Dharmadev suddenly stopped. "Why have you stopped, father?" inquired Ghanshyam. Dharmadev pointed to a spot ahead of them. Ghanshyam saw that there was a tiger resting under a tree. The tiger's eyes shone, and he was yawning.

The tiger soon smelt human flesh, and so he roared as he got up. Dharmadev, Rampratapbhai and Gauri shook with fear at the sight. Dharmadev thought that all four of them would
be killed by the tiger. But in the meantime Ghanshyam ran up to the tiger, stood in front of him and looked steadily into his eyes. At once the tiger calmed down, bent his head as if paying homage, walked respectfully round Ghanshyam, and lay down to sleep quietly.

Ghanshyam then turned to his father and said, "Do not be afraid, father. Take Gauri and follow me. The tiger will not harm anyone. He is sleeping soundly."

Accordingly, Dharmadev and Rampratap, along with Gauri, followed close behind Ghanshyam, and passed nervously by the sleeping tiger. In a short while, they all emerged from the jungle, and reached a neighbouring village. After staying there for the night with a relative called Oza, they all returned home with Gori the next day. Seeing Gauri safely back and hearing the story about Ghanshyam's encounter with the tiger, Bhaktimata was overjoyed.

38. Walking on Water

Ghanshyam and his friends walk on water during the heavy rain

One afternoon in Chhapaiya, Ghanshyam, accompanied by his younger brother, Ichchharam, and some friends, went to a place on the outskirts of the village. There they all had a bath in the Meen Lake and began to play *amli-pipli* under a banyan tree. The game went on till evening when, suddenly, it began to rain. At first they thought that the rain would stop after a short time, and that they would return home soon.

However, it rained heavily and continuously. Darkness spread all around. Thunder and lightning rent the sky. Ichchharam and the other smaller kids of his age began to cry. The lake was swelling rapidly. Within a short time, the whole of the surrounding area was inundated with water. The older boys, Veni, Madhav and Prag, were also worried about how they would reach home. Frightened, Ichchharam asked Ghanshyam, "What will happen now? How can we go home in this flood water? I will drown if I try to walk through the water?"

Ghanshyam told Ichchharam and the others not to worry, "Don't be afraid. Come on let us get down from the tree. I will walk in front. Ichchharam, you walk behind me holding on to my dhoti. The others follow similarly, one behind the other, holding on to one another's dhotis from behind. We shall walk on the water, and even the rain will not fall on us."

So saying, Ghanshyam got down from the tree. He kept Ichchharam behind him. Then followed Veni, Madhav and Prag and the others. Thus, holding on to one another's dhotis, they all walked behind Ghanshyam. When they came to the water's edge they were lifted above the ground by some unseen power. And so they walked across the water without even getting their feet wet. Rain fell on all sides, but it did not touch them.

And so they crossed the river and reached the outskirts of the village. Dharmadev, Bhaktimata and the parents of the other boys were all out searching for them.

Suddenly, they were astonished to see the boys walking on the water. There was a brilliant light emanating from Ghanshyam's body. They all bowed to Ghanshyam, believing him to be God himself. They were pleased by the safe return of their sons. They bowed to Ghanshyam and returned home happily with their sons.

39. Thieves in a Fix

There was a farm at a short distance from Ghanshyam's house. It belonged to Dharmadev, and was looked after by Rampratapbhai. Once, Ghanshyam and Rampratapbhai decided to take care of the jackfruits growing on a jack tree. They thought that when the jackfruits ripen, they would pick them from the tree, and bring them home for Dharmadev and Bhaktimata to eat.

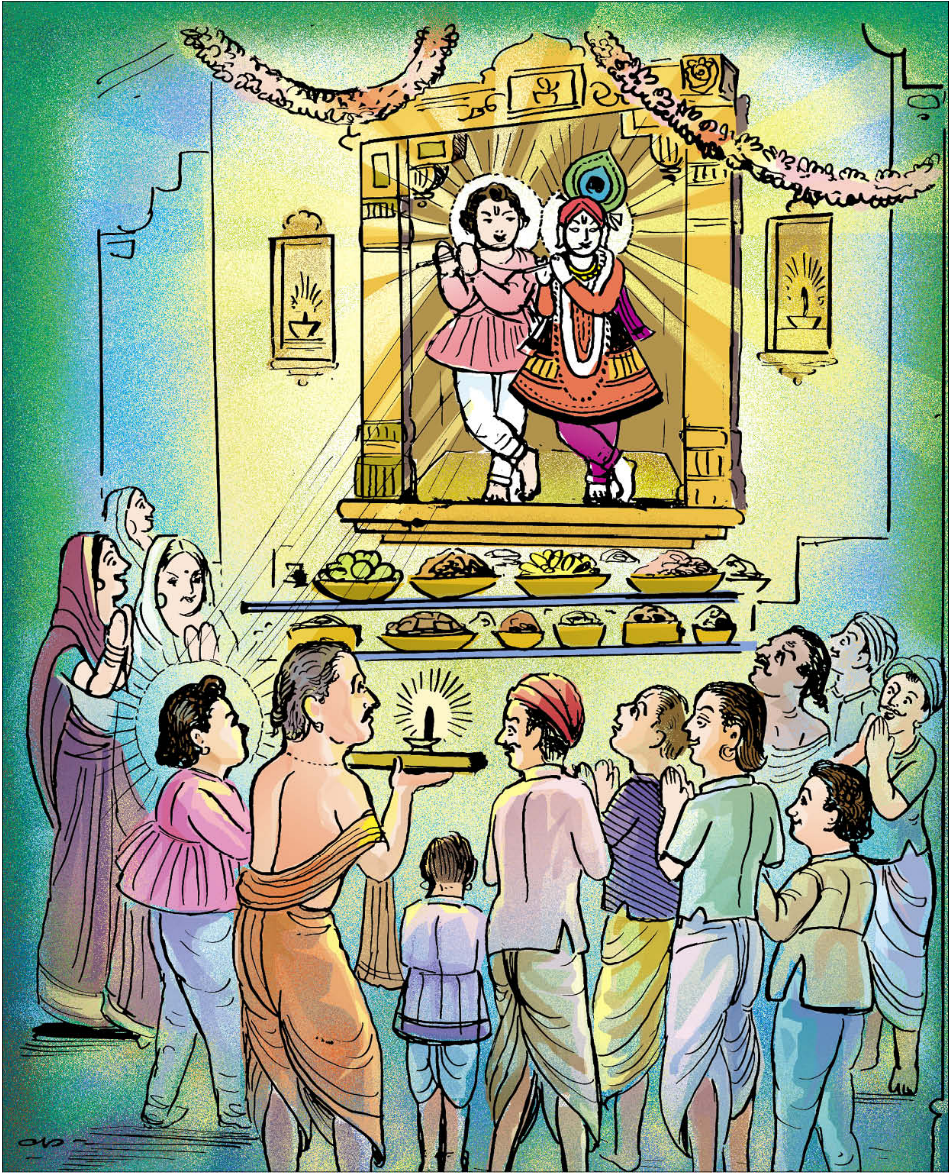
One night, two thieves came, made a hole in the farm wall, and entered. Silently and stealthily they walked up to the jackfruit tree and climbed it. They thought, "The fruits are all ripe. Let us pick them. We shall carry them away in bags, and earn a lot of money by selling them in the market." But, no sooner did they touch the first jackfruit in order to pluck it, both their hands got stuck to the fruit. They tried very hard, but could not free their hands. While they were still struggling, the day dawned, and soon it was morning.

Dharmadev, carrying a water pot in hand, came to the farm to brush his teeth. The two thieves saw him, and quickly repented for their wrongdoing. They prayed, and decided in their minds, "Never again shall we steal. Never again shall we take away anything without asking the owner's permission. O God! Please set us free. If Rampratapbhai comes, he will break our bones. Please, O Lord, we pray to you again. Set us free. Save us." Soon they saw, in the distance, Rampratapbhai and Ghanshyam coming towards them. They were panic-stricken.

When Rampratapbhai saw the thieves on the tree, he ran to beat them with his stick, but Ghanshyam stopped him. He went near the jackfruit tree along with his father. With tears in their eyes, the thieves begged for forgiveness, "O Dharmadev! We have committed a crime. We came to your farm to steal the jackfruits, but our hands got stuck to the fruits. So we cannot get down from the tree. Please set us free, and forgive our mistake. We shall never again steal anything."

Listening to their tearful plea, Ghanshyam just gave a divine look. At once, their hands were freed. Both the thieves, then climbed, bowed to Dharmadev, Rampratap and Ghanshyam, and once again pleaded to be forgiven. Ghanshyam told them. "Do not steal any more. Stealing is a grave sin." So saying, he picked two ripe jackfruits and gave one to each of them. He then blessed them before they left.

40. Darshan in Two Forms


Ghanshyam gives darshan in two forms

It was the Diwali festival period. Dharmadev and Bhaktimata began preparations for the Annakut festival from the day of Dhanteras. Sweets like ladoo*, jalebi, mesur, mohanthal, sata, barfi, penda*, etc. were prepared. A variety of savoury and fried items like *sev*, *chevdo*, *fafda, mathia, cholafali*, etc. were also prepared. On Diwali day, Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi, along with other women from the village, who had come to Dharmadev's house, began cooking from early in the morning.

Bhaktimata prepared *dudhpak, shrikhand, basundi, shiro, biranj* and other such delicacies, while Suvasinibhabhi made savouries like *dhokla, patra, bhajia, kachori*. Some of the other ladies prepared a variety of vegetable dishes, while others cooked a

variety of pulses. Some made *puris,* chapattis*, pakodi, khaja,* etc., while some others boiled rice, *dal, kadhi, khichdi*, etc. Rampratap, the eldest brother, went to get fruits like, chikoo, pomegranates, jackfruits, grapes, sugarcane, bananas, oranges, and cashew nuts from the family farm.

In Thakorji's room, Ghanshyam helped his father with the decorations. They dressed Thakorji in beautiful clothes. Garlands of leaves were hung up everywhere. *Divas* were lighted. By this time, it was eleven o'clock. Then, plates filled with a variety of foods were arranged before Thakorji. By twelve, all the sweets, savoury foodstuffs, pulses, vegetables and fruits had been arranged. Betel leaves were also placed before the deity. Then, everyone sat down before Thakorji to sing *thals*. Afterwards Dharmadev lit the *arti*, and started waving it before Thakorji, accompanied by the ringing of bells and beating of drums. All the villagers gathered at Dharmadev's house at the time of *arti* for darshan of the *annakut*.

Then a miracle happened! The people sometimes looked in the direction of Dharmadev and sometimes in the direction of Thakorji. They saw two forms of Ghanshyam, one by the side of Thakorji, and the other by the side of Dharmadev, who was waving the *arti*. They saw these twin forms of Ghanshyam till the ritual of *arti* was over. They were astonished. Everyone was convinced that Thakorji and Ghanshyam were one and the same. They all prostrated before both.

Seeing the miracle, Dharmadev understood that Ghanshyam was God Supreme. He immediately sent for a big plate. On it he put all the varieties of food that had been prepared and served it to Ghanshyam. Ghanshyam called his younger brother, Ichchharam, and both the brothers started eating in front of Thakorji. People remained to have darshan of the *annakut* till two o'clock in the afternoon. Then Ghanshyam personally served the consecrated food from the *annakut* to each of the villagers.

People returned home, full of joy at having received *prasad* from the hands of God himself!

41. The Priest's Sight Is Restored

Ghanshyam restores the sight of the blind priest, Vrajvihari

Behind Dharmadev's house in Ayodhya was a Mahadev mandir. Ghanshyam went there to have Mahadev's darshan. When he was engaged in darshan, he heard a man by the name Devibaksh, praying to Lord Shankar, and asking for something which he shouldn't ask. Hearing this, Ghanshyam was upset. He felt like leaving home to practise austerities. He thought, "There must be many such ignorant people in this world. I want to teach them the spiritual truths and liberate them." With this thought he returned home, in a gloomy frame of mind.

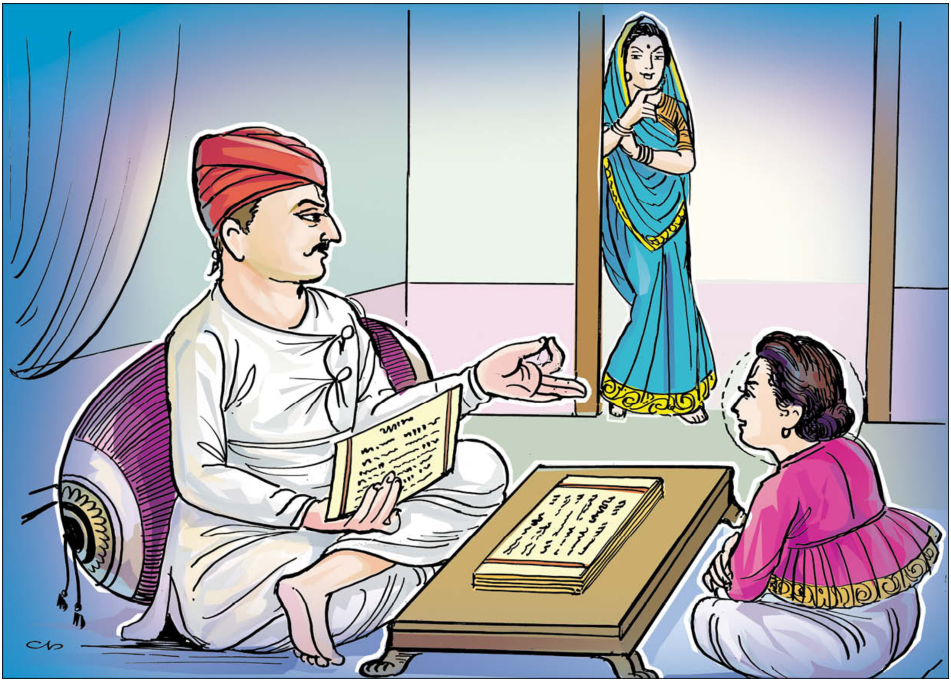
When Dharmadev saw that his son was depressed, he asked him. "Ghanshyam! Why do you look so depressed today?" Ghanshyam laughed the question away saying, "No, I am not at all depressed."

The next day, Ghanshyam went for darshan at the Vidyakund Mandir. A blind Brahmin named Vrajvihari was the pujari of that mandir. He had learnt the whole of the Ramayan and Mahabharat by heart. So, sitting there in the mandir, he was narrating the stories from the Ramayan. Many devotees were listening to the story with rapt attention. During the narration, Ghanshyam heard the priest saying, "Ramchandra left home to stay in exile in a forest for a period of fourteen years." Immediately Ghanshyam again thought of leaving home and going to a forest to do austerities. He requested Vrajvihari, the blind Brahmin, to stop the story for a moment, because he wanted to ask a question about *vairagya*. The Brahmin replied, "Asking questions during the discourse causes disturbance. So don't ask questions during the discourse.

Come to my house, and I shall answer all of your questions." Ghanshyam was disappointed with the reply. He quietly went and sat on the verandah outside.

bGhanshyam felt pity for Vrajvihari. He placed his hand on the Brahmin's head and gazed into his eyes. To his joy, Vrajvihari began to see; his sight was restored. The Brahmin and all the devotees present there, had the vision of Lord Ramchandra in Ghanshyam. Vrajvihari fell at Ghanshyam's feet, and after receiving his blessings once more, he went home with joy and gratitude in his heart.

42. Ghanshyam's Daily Routine



Dharmadev teaches the shastras to Ghanshyam

Ghanshyam awoke daily at four o'clock in the morning. After getting up, he would meditate on God for a few minutes. Thereafter, he would go with his friends to the river Saryu. There, he would clean his teeth. Then after a bath, he would put on clean clothes and perform puja and meditation.

After that, he would have his glass of milk and then sit down to his studies with Dharmadev. The latter would teach him logic, grammar, dharma shastras, Vedas, Upanishads, Gita, Sankhya, Yoga, Vedant, etc. Ghanshyam would listen to his father's teachings attentively. When Dharmadev completed his part of the teaching, Ghanshyam would study by himself.

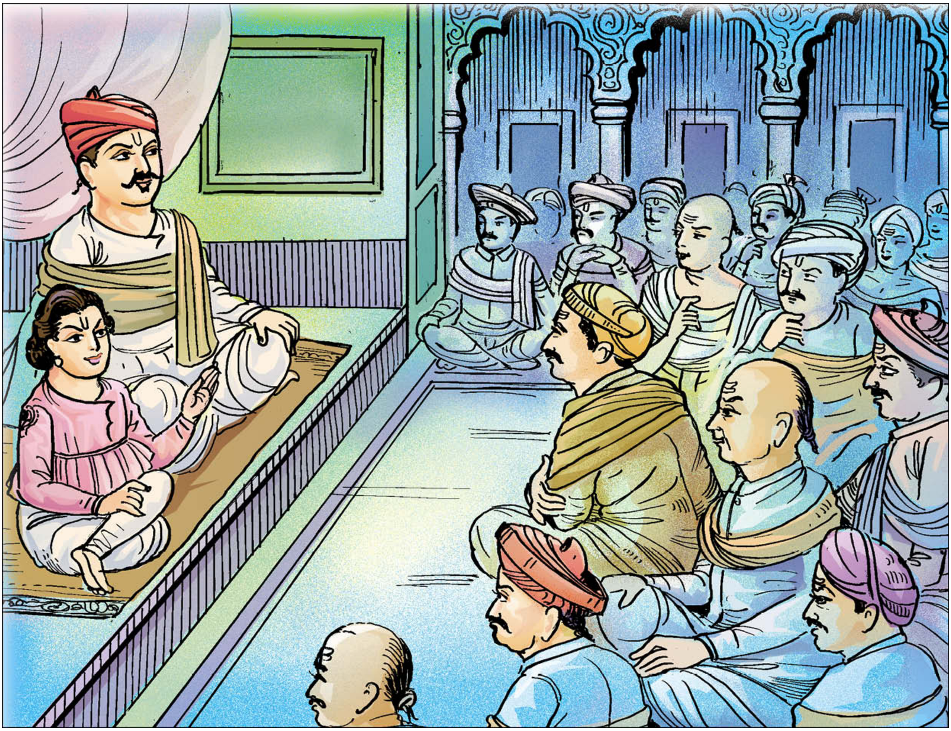
At nine, he would visit all the mandirs in Ayodhya and have darshan of the deities. Wherever the Ramayan was being narrated he would sit and listen to it with rapt

attention. At twelve he would return home, wash his hands and feet, and have his lunch with Dharmadev. Thereafter, he would resume his study.

At three in the afternoon, he would again go for a bath in the river. Then, accompanied by his friends, he would without fail, go to the mandir at Hanuman Gadhi for darshan during the evening *arti*. He would come back home only after the evening *arti* was over.

Returning home, he would again wash his hands and feet and then have dinner with Dharmadev. Thereafter, he would go and sit by the side of his father who would tell him stories from the Ramayan, Mahabharat, Purans and other shastras. He would listen with great attention and interest. Then, he would go to bed. Such was his daily routine.

43. Propagating the Vishishtadvait Teachings in Kashi



Ghanshyam establishes the Vishishtadvait teachings during the debate in Kashi

Ghanshyam had entered into his eleventh year. At about this time a lunar eclipse was to occur. Dharmadev decided to go to Kashi with some relatives and bathe in the holy Ganga after the eclipse.

Dharmadev was a renowned scholar. When the scholars in Kashi found out that Dharmadev had arrived in Kashi, and was on the banks of the Ganga by the Gomath,

they went to meet him. Ghanshyam was with Dharmadev. When they saw Ghanshyam they wondered if Bruhaspati himself had come in the form of a son to Dharmadev!

The scholars of Kashi had organized a debate on the shastras at the Gomath. Dharmadev was to be the chairman, and the debate would be attended by scholars of all the different schools of philosophy.

The Advait scholars started the discussion saying, “Everything is Brahman. Brahman is the only reality. All else is illusion.”

The Dvait scholars replied, “No, Brahman, *jiva*, and this world are all true.”

The debate continued for a long time. The scholars knew there would be no end to it. So they decided to ask Ghanshyam. They wondered which philosophy a miraculous child like him supported. His word would be regarded as final.

Thus, at everyone’s request and with Dharmadev’s permission, Ghanshyam entered the discussion. He beautifully and very clearly explained the deep and difficult meanings of verses from the Vedas. With the backing of the shastras he solidly propagated the Vishishtadvait philosophy. Everyone was spellbound by his knowledge and oratory.

As Ghanshyam continued to speak, rays of divine light emanated from his body, and so everyone seated there experienced samadhi. Each scholar saw his chosen deity in Ghanshyam’s form. Some saw Shankaracharya, others saw Sadashiv or Ramchandraji, and still others saw Shri Krishna.

In this state of samadhi everyone performed Ghanshyam’s *pujan* with sandalwood paste and kumkum. Dharmadev was greatly surprised on seeing all this. Finally, when Ghanshyam awoke everyone from samadhi they all prostrated before him and prayed for divine blessings.

Respect for Dharmadev rose greatly in Kashi. Everybody congratulated him on having such a miraculous son and hailed the glory of Ghanshyam. Dharmdev was also full of joy.

44. Bhaktimata and Dharmadev Pass Away

Ghanshyam was now eleven years of age. Bhaktimata and Dharmadev were quite old. One day, Bhaktimata went down with fever. Day by day her health became worse. Because of the fever and weakness, she became bedridden. One evening she called all her three sons and said to them, “My illness is getting worse everyday and my whole body is aching. I shall not live for very long. Rampratap and Suvasini, please take care of Ghanshyam and Ichchharam. Ghanshyam and Ichchharam, always obey your elder brother and *bhabhi*, and all of you live together in peace and unity.”

Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai wrote to all their relatives, asking them to come to Chhapaiya, since Bhaktimata’s end was drawing near. Once, Ghanshyam discoursed talked to his mother and also appeared to her in the divine form of Narayan with four arms. Bhaktimata closed her eyes and meditated on Ghanshyam. After a while she

quietly passed away and entered Akshardham.

The three brothers and their father, along with their relatives and villagers, performed the funeral rites and resolved that they would be as religious and devout as she was.

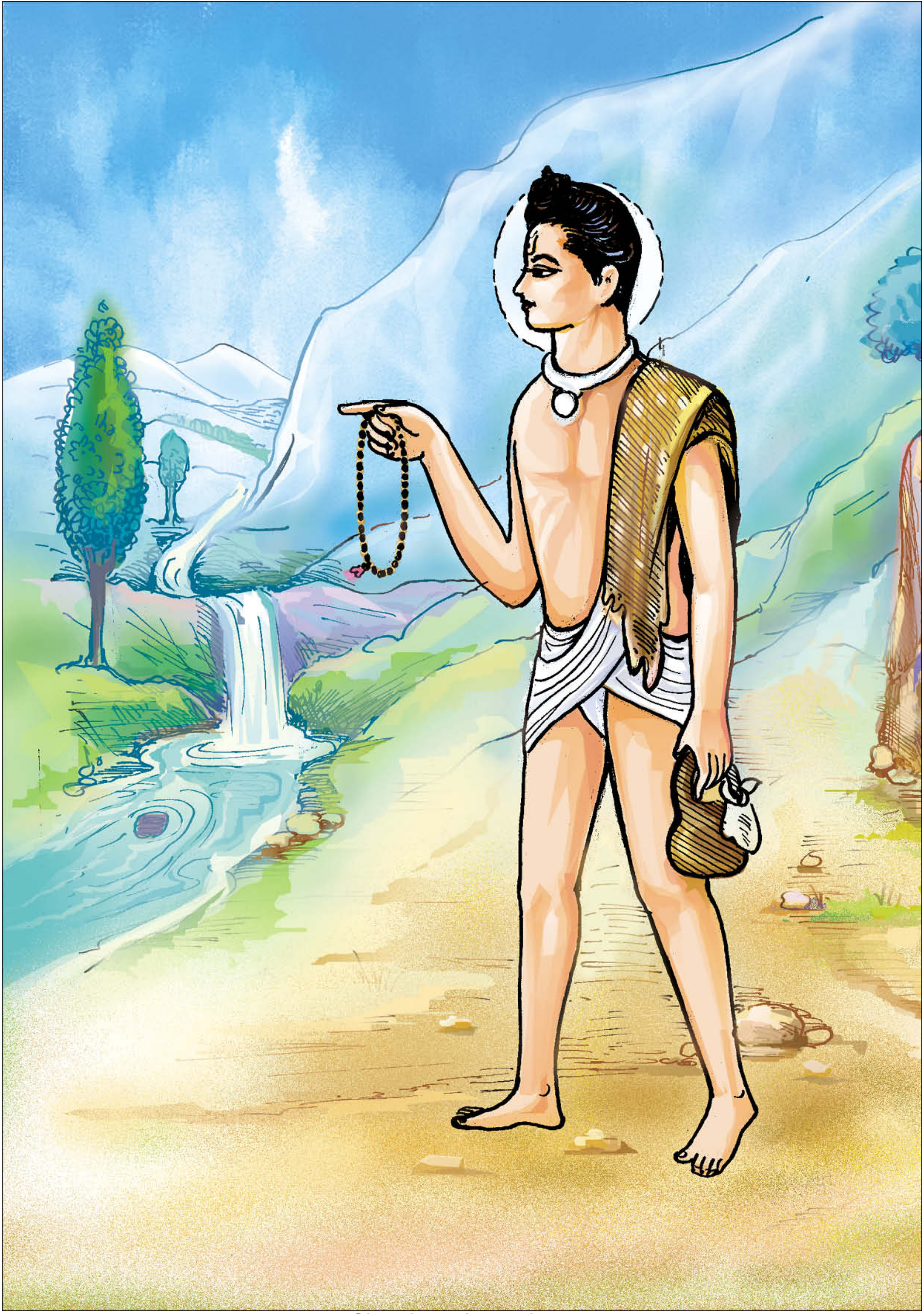
Six months later, Dharmadev also fell ill. Because of old age he felt very weak and tired. He was so feeble that he could not even get up from his bed. He distributed alms to the poor and gifts to the Brahmins. He asked his sons to read him stories from the Bhagvat.

One day, when the reading was over, he called all his three sons near. He said to Rampratap, “Listen Rampratap. Ghanshyam is God incarnate. He is not attached in any way to this mundane existence. So, please always treat him with love and respect. Do not speak to him harshly. Take good care of Ichchharam also. And you, Ghanshyam and Ichchharam, remember Rampratapbhai is your elder brother, and obey him. Please always follow these words of mine.”

After Dharmadev had spoken, a brilliant light emanated from the body of Ghanshyam. In that light, Dharmadev saw the twenty-four avatars of God – Ram, Krishna, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and others. Dharmadev’s mind became engaged in Ghanshyam. Lying in his bed, Dharmadev prayed to Ghanshyam and a few minutes later he breathed his last.

All were grief-stricken. They bathed Dharmadev’s body
with the holy water of the Ganga, and performed the funeral rites. Alms were given to the poor and to the Brahmins. All prayed to God that they become as pure and virtuous as Dharmadev was.

45. Ghanshyam Leaves Home



Ghanshyam leaves home

After the passing away of Bhaktimata and Dharmadev, Ghanshyam thought of leaving home, and practising austerities in a forest. He was waiting for a suitable opportunity to
leave home.

Meanwhile, one morning, he became very disinterested in the mundane nature of

the world. After finishing his morning bath, he went round to all the mandirs in Ayodhya and had darshan. When he was returning home, he passed a garden in which some wrestlers were practising their skills. On seeing Ghanshyam, the wrestlers surrounded him from all sides, and prevented him from proceeding further.

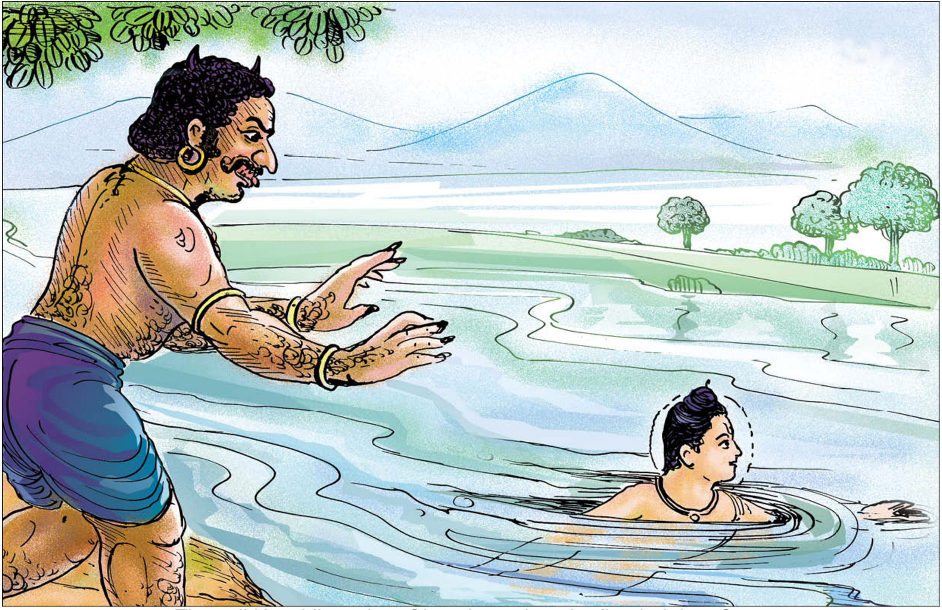
Ghanshyam, by using his divine power, made his body as big and as strong as the wrestlers, and entered into a combat with them. There were twenty-seven of them. However, he lifted them, one by one, spun them round and round and finally threw them on the ground. All their bones ached. No one could get up. Realizing their pitiable condition, all the twenty-seven wrestlers began to cry like small children.

The parents and relatives of the wrestlers went to Ghanshyam's elder brother to complain. They said to Rampratapbhai, "Your Ghanshyam has beaten our sons for no fault of theirs." When Rampratapbhai heard this, he thought, "Ghanshyam should be told off. If people started complaining about him daily, our reputation in the town will suffer. It is not proper that Ghanshyam misbehaves now that mother and father have passed away." Thinking so Rampratapbhai rebuked Ghanshyam severely. Ghanshyam heard his brother patiently and, in the end, said, "Respected brother. Rest assure, there will be no complaint against me from today."

It was then that Ghanshyam finalized his decision to leave home. After their evening meal, both Rampratap and Suvasinibhabhi went to sleep, with no inkling of what was to happen the next day.

Early next morning, Ghanshyam got up at half-past-three. Quietly, while everyone else was fast asleep he gathered a few things and walked out of the house. Whoever saw him thought he was going for his bath since he was walking towards the river Saryu.

At the time, Ghanshyam had a waistband of *moonj* grass. On his body there was only one piece of cloth and he wore a loin-cloth. On his back he had a *mrigacharma*, the skin of a deer. He held a *mala* in one hand and a stick of the *palash* tree in the other. At one end of the stick he had tied a small bundle of papers containing the essence of the shastras. He also carried a water-pot, alms bowl and a filter-cloth with him. A double string of *tulsi* beads hung round his neck and the sacred thread round his shoulders. He also took with him a Shaligram representing Vishnu, and a *batwo* of Balmukund, representing Shri Krishna. There was a *tilak* on his forehead and his hair was matted. He was walking barefoot. Clad in the manner of an ascetic, Ghanshyam left to perform austerities in the Himalayas, a long way beyond the river Saryu.


The evil Kaushik pushes Ghanshyam into the flooded river Saryu

46. On the Banks of River Saryu

Thus clad as a Varni, Ghanshyam, after leaving home, walked in the direction of river Saryu. He looked back frequently over his shoulders fearing, "What if my elder brother comes and takes me home! But now, I am determined not to return home, and want to perform austerities and help people attain moksha." He walked briskly on, and soon reached the bank of the Saryu.

It was the morning of 29 June 1792 CE (Ashadh *sud* 10, Samvat year 1849). There was a faint drizzle. The Saryu was, however, in flood, and was overflowing from both its banks, Ghanshyam stood on the banks, with a resolve to dive into the Saryu and cross it. Meanwhile, Kaliya, a leader of the *asurs*, sent the evil Kaushik with instructions to kill Ghanshyam. Kaushik came from behind stealthily, like a cat, and, with one blow, hurled little Ghanshyam into the flood waters of the Saryu. Ghanshyam was carried away by the floods and, within a short time, disappeared from sight.

Pleased with himself, Kaushik went to convey the good news to his chief, Kaliya.

47. Oceans of Tears

Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi lament the parting of Ghanshyam

At home, when Rampratapbhai and Suvasinibhabhi woke up they found that Ghanshyam was not in his bed. They thought, “Perhaps he has risen a little earlier then usual, and has gone to take an early bath. He will come back soon.” Rampratapbhai went away to work in his field as usual. Bhabhi prepared breakfast, and then started cooking the midday meal. In the busy hours of the morning, they forgot about Ghanshyam for a while.

But soon Bhabhi began to worry, “It is almost noon. Why hasn’t Ghanshyam returned from his bath?” For a long time she waited for Ghanshyam to return so that they could have their meal together. But there was no sign of Ghanshyam, and her anxiety increased. She called Ghanshyam’s friends and asked them, “Where is Ghanshyam? Have you seen him? Why has he not come back still? Do you know where he has gone?”

But his friends replied, “We do not know. He did not come with us. When we went to the river for our bath, he was not there. He did not come with us to bathe.” Bhabhi became more anxious than ever. She went to the houses of all the relatives in search of Ghanshyam. She enquired at the houses of Lakshmibai, Chandanmasi and others, but no one knew where Ghanshyam was. It was evening by then. Suvasinibhabhi sent a man to the farm to call Rampratapbhai home. When he came, she told him that Ghanshyam had not returned, and no one knew where he had gone.

Rampratapbhai, too, became deeply worried. He went and looked in all the mandirs where Ghanshyam used to go for darshan; but Ghanshyam could not be found. He then searched on the banks of the river Saryu, in the orchard of rose-apple trees, on the outskirts of the village, in the fields of Veni, Madhav and Prag; in fact, he searched all those places which Ghanshyam was in the habit of visiting, but nowhere could he find

him.

Ghanshyam's younger brother, Ichchharam, would ask, "Bhabhi, where has Ghanshyam gone? I do not like it in the house without him. Please bring him home." But Bhabhi had no answer. She was grief-stricken beyond words, and cried her heart out. Even Ghanshyam's friends were in no mood to play without him. Everyone asked, "Where is Ghanshyam? Where is Ghanshyam?" But no one could answer. Every now and then, his friends came enquiring, "Have you found Ghanshyam? We haven't found him, either. We went round all the places, and looked for him in the streets, in the village square, in the fields, everywhere, but he is not to be found anywhere. Where could he have gone? What could have happened to him? Why has he not come back?"

For Rampratapbhai it was unbearable. He was speechless with sorrow. His eyes were wet with tears. The relatives who had been looking everywhere also gave up the search as hopeless. It was now almost dark. Night was approaching. Still there were a few who, with lamps in their hands, continued the search for Ghanshyam, however bleak the chances of finding him.

At home, there was no end to Bhabhi's wailing. Ichchharamji, too, was also crying ceaselessly. Ghanshyam's friends were also in agony. Ghanshyam was the darling of them all. There was lamentation in every home of Ayodhya. Bhabhi was haunted by imaginary fears about Ghanshyam's safety, "What if he has been torn to pieces and devoured by a tiger or a wolf in the jungle? Or maybe he has been bitten by a poisonous snake? Or swallowed by a crocodile in the river?" Such fearful thoughts would cross her worried mind, and she cried all the more.

Finally, the thought arose, "Could he have left home for good, donned a sadhu's garb, and gone out into the forests to do austerities, because he was rebuked by his elder brother yesterday? But his clothes and his sandals are still here. How would he walk barefoot? How would he keep well in the rain? How would he bear the cold and the heat, barebodied as he must be? Who would feed him in the jungle? How would Ghanshyam, who was used to eating curds, milk and sweets everyday, now like eating the wild fruits and leaves of the jungle? The wild animals will devour him." Such thoughts would make her cry even more.

After going everywhere and searching all the places over and over again, Rampratapbhai, exhausted and disheartened, returned home at midnight. Ghanshyam could not be found. Rampratapbhai's endurance was at breaking point. The agony was terrible. Both he and his wife cried out to God for help, "O God! Please find our Ghanshyam for us. Our hearts are broken. It is unbearable. O Lord! Take us away, if you like; but give us back our Ghanshyam, who is dearer to us than our own lives. O God! Please find Ghanshyam for us. People will accuse us, saying, that brother and *bhabhi* drove him out! Some will say that Ghanshyam has gone away because his brother and *bhabhi* harassed him beyond endurance. We promise to do as he wishes."

In this way they both continued to lament. Night passed and morning came. Rampratapbhai sent men with horses in all directions in a last desperate search for Ghanshyam. Rampratapbhai stopped going to his farm to work. No one took any food. No one liked to eat. Ichchharam kept on crying the whole day, remembering his

brother all the time. Thus, days passed, five days, then ten. But no news of Ghanshyam came. Everybody was utterly, hopelessly grief-stricken. As people said later, oceans of tears were shed by Ichchharam and Suvasinibhabhi, who very often suddenly woke up from their sleep, bewildered and distraught, and cried out, “Ghanshyam! Ghanshyam!”

The whole city of Ayodhya was plunged into grief, unspeakable grief, and felt abandoned and desolate.

Glossary

A

Akshardham The vast, immeasurable and all pervading divine abode of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

apsara Celestial damsels who reside in the sky and are regarded as the wives of the Gandharvas. They can change their shapes and are endowed with superhuman powers.

ashwamedh A special type of yagna ceremony.

asan A seat.

B

balprabhu Child-God.

bawas Ascetics, sadhus.

bhagwan God.

bharatbhumi Hindustan, India.

C

chusni A piece of wood or ivory for a child to suck.

D

dakshina A gift given to Brahmins or priests at the end of a religious ceremony.

dvait One of the beliefs of Vedant philosophy.

G

gita The great philosophical poem, a part of the epic Mahabharat.

gulal A red powder.

I

ishtadev One’s most cherished deity.

J

jiva Soul.

K

khes A loose cloth worn over the shoulders.

krityas Demonesses.

L

Lakshmiji Goddess of fortune, prosperity and beauty.

M

mandap Canopied hall.

mahant Head of a mandir.

mumukshus One who desires to attain moksha.

N

nyay One of the six systems of Indian philosophy.

P

patasa Sugar-cake.

R

rakshas Demons.

S

Sankhya One of the six systems of Indian philosophy.

sampradaya Traditional handing down of knowledge through successive preceptors; religious organization.

shiro a sweet dish made of wheat flour, ghee, milk and sugar.

T

thakorji Murti of God.

tilak A mark made with sandalwood paste on the forehead.

U

Upanishads Philosophical part of the Vedas.

V

Vedas The sacred shastras of the Hindus that are the oldest in the world.

Y

Yoga One of the systems of Indian philosophy.